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From the Art Institution to Instituent Praxis: Configurations of Power in the Contemporary European Art World

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis; that the following thesis is entirely my own work; and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for another degree or qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is the outcome of research that considers ontological and political conceptualisations of the notion of institution in relation to practices and discourses in the contemporary European art world and the power relations therein. The concept of 'instituent praxis', as theorised in Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval's *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century* (2019), is centrally employed. The thesis proposes an extended theoretical framework around this concept, taking into account the late capitalist socio-political condition and responding to aspirations for political autonomy. The conceptual move from institution to instituent praxis is advocated in the belief that the second concept enables a more productive angle from which to address configurations of power in the context of contemporary art institutions and across their diversity in Europe.

The first part of the thesis delineates this move from institution to instituent praxis. Chapter 1 traces definitions of institution in accounts of European (neo)avant-gardes and threads of Institutional Critique. Chapter 2 outlines instituent praxis, i.e. the collective and common creation of significations that can become rules of law. The concept's engagement with notions of power and the creation of the historically new is accentuated against other (politically transformative) understandings of institution. The analysis also expands on Félix Guattari's ideas on signification and the production of subjectivity through affect – already incubated in Dardot and Laval's definition. Chapter 3 deploys this theoretical framework and speculates on art-institutional intersections with non-art-world practice – around issues of labour organisation, managerialism, algorithmic and institutional infrastructure.

In the second part (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), art-world case studies are further dissected in three thematic sets. First, discourse in the art world, in relation to Michel Foucault's notions of power and parrhesia, as well as concepts of (counter-)publics. Secondly, a geopolitically minded contribution to the discourse on experimental European art institutions. Finally, the condition of

the real, as advocated by instituent praxis and portrayed in alter-, para- and mock-institutions. Overall, the analysis underlines interweavements between affect / desire and the production of meaning as rule-making; sketches the contribution of instituent praxis to political transformation; and ponders on persisting or parallel functions of power.

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Introduction

As evident in its title, *From the Art Institution to Instituent Praxis*, this thesis observes and explores shifts around a key term – institution – in contemporary art writing. Furthering this discourse, the study at hand proposes the transfer of focus from the 'institution', as an established site or (customary) regime mediating a range of activities, to 'instituent praxis', as a complex process of acting that may engender transformative results. The aim of this research has been to attend critically to the conceptualisation of such process; to explore its intellectual history, and even *propose* such an intellectual history; and to consider a range of case studies that relate, one way or another, to this process. The subtitle of the thesis, *Configurations of Power*, indicates how this research proceeded: to theorise the proposed shift from the 'institution' to 'instituent praxis' required a critical attendance to how various sets of antagonisms have entered the theoretical frameworks examined but also actual art contexts alert to instituting and its dynamics. The question of power has been found to play a key role in both discursive analysis and efforts to advance change in given material and ideological circumstances. What this thesis has sought to achieve is a theoretical framework that interrogates but also substantiates the complexity and importance of the shift from the institution to instituent praxis.

This Introduction opens with a presentation of the registers selected to advance such an analysis. It then proceeds with an elaboration of the geopolitical remit of the thesis and the context of some of the major case studies discussed. Subsequently, a cartography for the political positionality in my research is outlined, before introducing the main theoretical debates, research questions and lines of argumentation that shape the thesis. The final section offers an overview of the methodology and the thesis structure.

Institution and art: An indexical selection of registers

The notion of institution, its social and historical function, and the relation of this function to art (communicative cultures of the aural, the visual, the sign) have chronicled a growing multiplicity of registers since the latter half of the twentieth century – at least in Western-centric artistic discourses and practices. Without intending to contrive an archaeology of origins on the relation of institution and art, this thesis employs an indexical selection of such registers in terms of a theoretical and historical background, presented briefly in this section. The critical discussion (or contribution) of this thesis addresses a contemporary period defined by globalisation and hallmarked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 – a period prefaced by visions and realities of economic, political and mediatic international convergences and integrations in previous decades. It is also a period fractured by economic, political and institutional crises. Furthermore, the majority of the case studies discussed are pertinent to the European continent. Europe is seen as a geographical core of tensions whereby traditionally imperial economies interact with emerging or peripheral economies in a global context leading to a recent shift from an East-West binary to a North-South one. At the same time, Europe concentrates a multiplicity of practices that relate remarkably diversely with institutions and institutional power.

A first annotation in this indexical selection of registers would seek to specify notions of the institution and its relation to art through discourses of twentieth century artistic avant-garde(s). In this context, I discuss the institution of art in terms of aggregate social and historical function, alongside the retrospective framing of avant-garde(s) as incubating institutionally relevant issues, such as functions of aesthetic conventionality and markers of artistic validity. A related indexical assemblage is encountered in practices associated with Institutional Critique and refers to thematisations and anxieties around the conditioning of art by institutional variants, such as the spatial, social or economic limitations and prescriptions within art production and distribution. Institutional Critique

has largely been historicised as a branch of Conceptual Art that appeared in the 1960s and permutated since into subsequent waves.

Arguably, although Institutional Critique persists at least as an artistic methodology in the contemporary period, some key institutional shifts extend beyond artistic or curatorial methodological nuances. Such shifts denote another set of registers that point to the global proliferation and diversification of art institutions (such as museums, galleries, artist-run or non-profit spaces of diverse scope and scale, various cultural media outlets) and nudge the possibility of a (creative) practice that could be examined as distinctly institutional, even though it might be artistic, curatorial, organisational or other. Institutional practice could, then, be regarded as performable by artists, curators and artistic directors as much as institutions or organisations. This hypothesis leads me to a wider indexicality that could be seen as permeating, but also exceeding, art-historical registers of the notion of the institution, even when art history involves an extended frame that considers equally the function of art institutions and their creative/organisational practice. This wider indexicality latches on to social and political ontology, judicial aspects, power and psychoanalysis, and poses questions around the processual meaning of institution, its interrelation with the making of history and temporality and its capacity to confine, exclude, empower or create. This thesis is premised on theoretical developments that engage such questions, speculating on and exploring their reflection on critical practices and debates in the art world and beyond.

Research affinities and tales of institutional turmoil: On Europe and the thesis' case studies

Between 2011 and 2014, the years before I conducted this research, I was involved curatorially and collegially with contemporary art institutions in Athens, Greece. For the most part, my work entailed assisting operations and

only occasionally tasks where I was sharing a significant part of the creative responsibility. Some of the institutions I engaged with in more or less direct ways were entirely run on a voluntary basis or employed a number of unwaged workers in positions that were supposedly internships but often demanded full-time work. In Athens, such working conditions are typical in commercial and profit-making private galleries of a global purview that may even participate in global art fairs, such as Frieze Art Fair. But the same working conditions are also present in other kinds of art institutions that aspire to a more public and less commercial function. Such institutions often survive on visitors' donations or other precarious sponsorships while relying on the free labour of artists and curators (who hope for future recognition through networking opportunities) and/or underpaid and unofficially hired manual and technical labourers. In such contexts, even venue-related costs can be kept to a minimum through informal arrangements as 'personal favour' (between the venue owners and the organisation seeking temporary or more permanent occupancy) or 'friendly sponsorship' amidst a rapidly shifting and unregulated property market, financial recession and non-structured gentrification. Nepotism and network-building through interpersonal relations have traditionally been the main job-seeking methods, across the art institutional spectrum in the country, although there have been steps towards more meritocratic hiring methods in some large-scale public institutions. In comparison to other national contexts from which the thesis' cases studies are drawn, Greek art workers but also art institutions are disadvantaged by the absence of a public funding body for contemporary art. Moreover, the basic public regulatory frameworks that could attend to the initiatives of independent artists or other cultural workers are lacking in terms of scope of responsibility and outreach within the artistic community. Contemporary art and its institutions are forced to stagnate around private clients/collectors and their entourages that operate as patrons, perceived often as a substitute for a public or state infrastructure – that is, large-scale private foundations are supposed to be of public benefit.[1] The

[1] Such foundations include the Onassis Cultural Centre Athens and The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center.

Greek state has consistently fostered this process of private-public governance that essentially entails outsourcing to private realms functions, whose equivalents in other national cultural policies and bodies (such as the Arts Council in the UK) are publicly governed. This tendency is prescribed more by financial instability and less by the respective political leaning of different governments. The poor public infrastructure and policy for contemporary art is also related to the latter's typical casting as of lower cultural importance by the Greek State, which has focused on the institutional promotion of the Greek antiquity. The conditions described above long precede the Greek fiscal and debt crisis of 2010, even though the ensuing recession led to the further deterioration of the art economy.

Summarily presented above, most of the problems encountered in the Greek art field are far from exceptional. Rather, they appear to be more or less common across the art centres and peripheries in Europe and beyond – and they provided the main impetus to undertake this research.[2] The commonalities that sparked off my initial research interest have to do with the conditions of work and relations of power within art institutions and in the arts more broadly. Such issues have largely been tackled by – also widespread – traditions of artistic and other discourses and practices that have been critical towards institutions and/or the institution at large, which is why my research developed as a broader theoretical exploration into power relations in the art world and the notion of institution as such.

The case studies explored in specific chapters, or in some cases in more than one chapters, are representative of diverse engagements and interrogations of the institution, or the process of instituting, or both. A thread of discussed

[2] See Minna Henriksson, Erik Krikortz and Airi Triisberg, eds, *Art Workers: Material Conditions and Labour Struggles in Contemporary Art Practice* (Berlin, Helsinki, Stockholm, Tallinn: Nordic-Baltic Art Workers' Network for Fair Pay, 2015) accessed November 6, 2016, http://www.art-workers.org/download/ArtWorkers.pdf;
Michał Kozłowski et al., eds., *Joy Forever: The Political Economy of Social Creativity* (London: MayFlyBooks, 2014);
Zoran Erić and Stevan Vuković, eds, 'Precarious Labour in the Field of Art,' *OnCurating.org*, no. 16 (Zurich: Dorothee Richter and the Department of Cultural Analysis, Zurich University of the Arts, 2013).

practices responds to issues of labour in the context of art institutions. For instance, Carrot Workers' Collective and close affiliates (since 2010) Precarious Workers Brigade are UK-based artists collectives – notably, of mixed nationalities – that have focused on the condition of art workers through a range of activities both within and beyond art institutions. Another stream of case studies mainly in Chapter 4 pertains to discursive practices that have been or could be considered critical or propositional in art-institutional, curatorial or pedagogical contexts. I have taken into account the diversity of such practices in terms of their scale, format and institutional affiliation, so as to complicate theoretical observations. In one case, I look at four different discursive platforms that sought to reclaim education from institutional contexts of Higher Education – the Copenhagen Free University in Copenhagen; the Anti-university of London; the Free Slow University Warsaw; and Silent University which has been operating transnationally. I also discuss a long-term research project, Former West, conducted under the aegis of BAK in Utrecht, in order to consider the relationship between the project's discursive/curatorial format and the delivery of its proclaimed intentions towards a Former West. Chapter 5, the penultimate chapter before Conclusions, focuses specifically on case studies drawn from contexts that self-identify or could be seen as European semi-peripheries. This was in response to the observed and often unintended reproduction of geopolitical power relations within a discourse that assigns socially-engaged and critical value to certain art institutions that in one way or another oppose dominant neoliberal narratives or conditions. Such critical practice from within art institutions is often historicised as mainly but not exclusively relevant to Western and Northern European contexts, even though there is ample historical evidence suggesting that art institutions performed socially responsive and critical experimentations well before the 1990s and beyond Northwestern Europe. In this context, Chapter 5 refers to art institutions such as the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) in Helsinki that explicitly attempted to challenge narratives and exclusions around the Nordic identity within a European context, while it focuses centrally on art institutions and initiatives from Eastern and Southern European semi-

peripheries – for instance, Vector in Romania and Kunsthalle Athena in Greece. The case of Documenta 14, 2017, also features among the thesis' case studies, not least as it sought to work across the power relations of the core and the semi-periphery. One case study in Chapter 6 is the New World Summit, a transnational project/organisation of global remit, self-identified as both political and artistic and initiated in 2012 by the Dutch artist Jonas Staal. Even though this is a global project, it is largely funded by European sources and thus, in some respects, it could be seen as reflecting European geopolitics.

It should be then clear that this research approaches Europe as an intricate constellation of not just of institutions and instituent practices but as a geopolitical space traversed by asymmetrical power relations. The thesis has not sought to map and define concretely these power relations, but rather grasp the dynamic that dictates or enables particular occurrences in relation to institutional politics, including the orientation of discourse, in concrete settings. I would argue that in very few cases we can witness, or even claim retrospectively, processes of uninterrupted praxis – if by the latter we mean a genuinely transformative procedure. Yet observing what I would call an *instituent problematic* in Europe holds undiminished value, especially in the period this research focuses on. Although presenting a short history of Europe since 1989 lies beyond the scope of this research, this is a period that opened with the violent dismantling of Yugoslavia that impacted, and still does impact, the entire region of the Balkans (including Greece) where a number of the case studies are drawn from. The approach to instituting in Former West would have been unthinkable had it not been for structural adjustment programmes associated with the in/famous 'transition' of Eastern Europe and the re-examination of the relationships between perceived 'cores' and 'peripheries.' The New Institutionalism, as a discourse advanced mainly in more affluent (if not core) spaces of Europe, did not survive the austerity wars that re-shaped European art scenes and politics even before the outbreak of the 2008 global financial crisis. Art theorists have reviewed the recent history of the continent captured by neo-liberalism as 'post-socialist' at large – that is, as unfolding

overall, and beyond the confines of the former East, as beyond the principles of public or state protection of the arts.[3] As the austerity wars intensified, the image of the European Union or, at least, of the Eurozone as an (economic) institution and their historical foundational premise of integration begun to be questioned, even in mainstream media and not just by radical Left marginal voices that traditionally opposed to them. The period between 2014 and 2019 saw the proliferation of cases of institutional exodus or expulsion of single nation-states from a supranational institution, such as the European Union, that, up to a historical point and at least in mainstream discourses, had been growing inclusively gained real and mediatic traction. The Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014 was not unrelated, considering the intensity of a collective imaginary of national self-determination that already involved radical institutional projection as transformation. Equally pertinent was the Catalan independence referendum in 2017, not least due to the phenomenal internal dissensus regarding its institutional legitimacy that led to its suppression through police violence and legal annulment. In the period I was concluding the thesis, in 2019, and throughout 2018, Europe remained of a fractured mentality led by the rise of right-wing populism. A number of commentators have considered the impact of these developments. For instance, Kuba Szreder's curatorial, academic and activist practice (discussed in chapter 4 and 5) has engaged with the rise of authoritarianism in a Polish context and Larne Abse Gogarty has discussed the implication of extreme right-wing politics in institutions of the art world in London.[4] Questions around 'democracy' as the model of art institutional deliberation have come to the fore,

[3] On Europe as a post-socialist geopolitical reality, see Angela Dimitrakaki, 'Art and Instituting for a Feminist Common/s: Thoughts on Interventions in the New "New Europe",' in *Inside Out: Critical Discourses Concerning Institutions*, ed. Alenka Gregoric and Suzana Milveska, 38-49 (Ljubljana: Museums and Galleries of Ljubljana and City Art Gallery Ljubljana, 2017). See also Zdenka Badovinac, 'The Critical Institution' and Nina Möntmann, 'A Letter from Europe,' ibid, pp 50-61 and pp 140-54 respectively.

[4] Kuba Szreder, 'Exercises in the Curatorial Open Form: On the Example of Exhibition Making Use; Life in Postartistic Times,' *Art & the Public Sphere* 6, No. 1-2, (September 2017): 51-67, accessed October 3, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1386/aps.6.1-2.51_1;
Larne Abse Gogarty, 'The Art Right,' *Art Monthly*, April 2017, 6-10.

not least in the research of Bassam el Baroni discussed in Chapter 4.[5] The above suggest that the examination of instituent praxis is framed in environments of extreme polarity.

Documenta 14, which was shaped while I was carrying out research for the thesis, aimed to consider such shifting European dynamics. The controversy that grew around it is a salient example of the new terrain in which art institutions are having to operate. Documenta 14 is the latest edition of one of the most important global large-scale periodical exhibitions of contemporary art. Documenta has been taking place every five years in the German city of Kassel since 1955 with the mission to showcase and curate the most important tendencies of contemporary art globally. Under the artistic directorship of Adam Szymczyk, Documenta 14 adopted a dual location shared between Athens and Kassel. A great part of the exhibition preparation as well as a long-term public programme took place in Athens during the years before the official show and in a context of escalating confrontation between the Greek left-led government that came to power in 2015, the Eurozone where German capital was playing a dominant role and global financial institutions such as the IMF overseeing neoliberal adjustment policies.[6] This was a historical decision for the institution of Documenta that only twice before had used sites outside of Kassel and only in the form of either relatively short-term events prior to the main exhibition in Kassel (Documenta 11, 2002) or as satellite venues (Documenta 13, 2012). Documenta 14's dual location was a response to the recently emergent austerity crises within Europe and the perceived national power shifts, not least in the German – Greek dynamic. Already since its pre-

[5] Bassam El Baroni, 'The Post-Agonistic Institution: Four Positions on the Structural Relation Between Art and Democracy,' in *How Institutions Think: Between Contemporary Art and Curatorial Discourse*, ed. Paul O'Neill, Lucy Steeds and Mick Wilson, 229-35 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

[6] See Angela Dimitrakaki, 'Hospitality and Hostis: An Essay on Dividing Lines, Divisive Politics and the Art Field'
in *Greece: Archaeology of the Future*, ed. Kateryna Botanova and Christos Chrissopoulos, 128-47 (Basel: Culturescapes, 2017);
Kate Allen and Guy Chazan, 'Germany reaps a €2.9bn gain from Greek bond holdings,' *Financial Times*, June 22, 2018, accessed January 20, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/9b3d38a2-7574-11e8-aa31-31da4279a601.

exhibition activity, Documenta 14 had adopted the 'working title' *Learning from Athens.* Szymczyk stated that the title did not imply that the Germany-based exhibition suddenly desired to be condescendingly influenced or instructed by Athens as a beleaguered case of exception, but rather that the curatorial process which is always formative to the curatorial team was now to be conducted from the location of Athens and directed towards the globe.[7] However, Szymczyk and Documenta 14's intentions to precisely condemn the harsh treatment of the German government towards the Greek state were to a great extent received negatively or as another form of neocolonial art washing.[8] Despite the perhaps temporary but obviously booming effect that Documenta had for contemporary art in Athens, accusations of exoticising Orientalism and aiding the intensification of gentrifying forces within the already impoverished Athenian context were widespread and diverse. A large part of the criticism towards Documenta 14 targets a non-profit, non-commercial art institution of liberal and relatively inclusive principles and opposes primarily the institution's symbolic power, from which economic consequences can arise. Especially when such symbolic power is mobilised by the institution to expose economic disparities or (perceived) associated hierarchies, but instead it is seen as exacerbating them, questions arise regarding the precise stakes within (art) institutional crises and their interrelation with political narratives and imaginaries.

And yet, noteworthy in all the aforementioned historical developments is the unprecedented pace of institutional creativity and dissolvability within financial, bureaucratic, judiciary, governmental and political frames. These could be apprehended as ongoing institutional crises and micro-decay of structures such as the trade union and the political party, but also the nation-state and

[7] Adam Szymczyk, Interview by Despina Zefkili, *Athinorama*, May 2, 2017, accessed January 17, 2019, https://www.athinorama.gr/cityvibe/article/adam_szymczyk_i_documenta_den_irthe_stin_athina_gia_na_kakan_anakalupseis_i_athina_einai_enas_katapliktikos_topos_ap_ton_opoio_na_milas__-2521241.html.

[8] Helena Smith, '"Crapumenta!"...Anger in Athens as the Blue Lambs of Documenta Hit Town,' *The Guardian*, May 14, 2017, accessed February 2, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/may/14/documenta-14-athens-german-art-extravaganza.

supra-national institutional edifices, whose borders and permitted population influxes are increasingly plunged in new indeterminacies. Global turbulences of institutional alteration and the ensuing imaginaries for restructure are inseparable from processes of othering as well as the construction and mythification of otherness, often in ways that flatten profound ambiguities into seemingly self-evident narratives.

Such processes constitute the backdrop for my research, which takes into account and discusses dominant conditions of rhetoric and discourse as also pertinent to the modalities for the mediation and narrativisation of events of global institutional importance. Inaccurate, obfuscating, sensationalising tendencies that often misconstrue and vilify underprivileged and violently displaced social groups have been alarmingly on the rise and usually seek output in authoritarian solutions. Concurrently, new technological capitalist imperatives that are hardly democratic have appeared as unprecedentedly exploitative of psychographic information, data and profiling and psychologically manipulative towards human behaviour, potentially even in cases that have led to or contributed towards historical institutional shifts, such as the EU referendum in the UK.[9] In such conditions, democracy itself is at risk of either being reduced to a capitalist pretense or downright authoritarianism.

On writing the thesis: The case for political positionality

An articulation that (inadvertently) points to the theoretical proximity of institution to politics and democracy comes from philosopher Jacques Rancière. According to him, '[d]emocracy is […] not a political regime in the sense that it forms one of the possible constitutions which define the ways in which people assemble under a common authority.'[10] Rather, he suggests,

[9] See Anthony Barnett, 'Democracy and the Machinations of Mind Control,' *The New York Review of Books*, December 14, 2017, accessed June 5, 2018, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/12/14/democracy-and-the-machinations-of-mind-control/.
[10] Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 32.

‘[d]emocracy is the very institution of politics itself – of its subject and of the form of its relationship.’ Thus, for Rancière, democracy is in some sense effectuated in and through the institution of politics. This process is rather liminal – a ‘state of exception’[11] or an anomalous ‘deviation from [the] normal order of things’ or ‘an always provisional accident within the history of forms of domination.’[12] If a subject is defined in its relation to its participation within a condition of ‘*arkhêin*’ or ‘the power to rule’ and if there are ‘qualifications’ appropriate to ruling, the subject of politics or the ‘*demos*’ or the ‘people’ rests on those without any such qualification.[13] The political subject or ‘the people is a supplementary existence that inscribes the count of the uncounted, or part of those who have no part […] as a surplus in relation to every count of the parts of society.’[14] As subject, this supplementary part makes possible its identification ‘with the whole of the community,’ but not as ‘the labouring and suffering populace that emerges on the terrain of political action’ nor as the ‘greedy masses’ or the ‘ignorant populace.’[15] Rancière alludes here to a ‘structural’ surplus or ‘void’ that always ‘separates the community out from the sum of the parts of the social body.’ This is directly related to his assertion that ‘political subjects […] are not social groups but rather forms of inscription that (ac)count for the unaccounted.’[16]

Democracy as the institution of politics takes place when the political subject, which is beyond any commonality apart from having no qualification to rule, ruptures ‘the *nemeïn* upon which the *nomoi* of the community are founded’ and thus overthrows the given or normal ‘distribution of the sensible.’[17] Rancière and the literature on his theory have largely focused on the definition and significance of such distribution within an aesthetic and political framework. My thesis is more preoccupied with the thread of the *nemeïn* (i.e. partitioning or

[11] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 31.
[12] Ibid., 35.
[13] Ibid., 30.
[14] Ibid., 33.
[15] Ibid., 33-34.
[16] Ibid., 35.
[17] Ibid., 36.

distributing) that founds *nomoi* (i.e. rules of law). Lingering on this etymological connection between *nemeïn* and *nomoi*, Rancière also defines politics as 'the instituting of a dispute ['litige institué'] over the distribution of the sensible, over that *nemeïn* that founds every *nomos* of the community.'[18] Rancière's account barely focuses on the precise process of this *instituting*. He is more preoccupied with the democratic subject as one that does not pre-exist but is always formed in its qualification of having no qualification to rule. My thesis seeks to accentuate and expand on the instituting process that refers to *nemeïn* and founds the nomos of the community. It speculates on and aspires to theorisations of democracy understood as moments, processes or horizons of political autonomy, by accentuating and exploring the neighbouring relation of the instituent.

Despite its potency, democracy is convoluted with problems both in contemporary thought and politics. Anthony Gardner has offered an updated and extensive critique of a broad spectrum of political philosophy that has focused on definitions of democracy, annotating the concept's dangerous cohabitation with processes of so-called democratisation, that can range from the aggressive marketisation and neoliberalisation of post-socialist economies to legitimised direct military action on behalf of coalitions – or impromptu institutions – of 'democratic' nation-states – a legitimation that is often belatedly debunked within a United Nations legal framework.[19] For Gardner, both 'neoliberal politics and much critical political philosophy ultimately replicated each other's strategic employment of democracy as the means to consign legitimizing value to *whatever* politics were conducted in its name.'[20] In relation to Rancière's theory of democracy, Gardner suggests that despite

[18] Ibid., 37.
[19] Anthony Gardner, *Politically Unbecoming: Postsocialist Art Against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 40. Gardner deconstructs retrospectively the narrative adopted for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003: 'it was found that Iraq could not comply with UN Resolution 1441 because it did not possess Weapons of Mass Destruction, and thus could not disarm what it did not have.' The invasion was led by the impromptu, US-initiated international institution that came to be known as the 'Coalition of the Willing.' The UK, Australia and Poland were some of the protagonist states in the Coalition.
[20] Gardner, *Politically Unbecoming*, 42.

its ‘ungovernable’ and ‘unnameable’ aspects, the democratic ‘signifier’ continues to autocratically designate the only ‘viable, radical, and supposedly unnameable politics after Soviet communism.’[21] Gardner appears to be alluding to what could be democracy’s limit, which is also incubated in the Rancièrian definition: would the disruption of democracy as the normative or dominant political signifier still constitute democratic politics?[22] In this context and centrally due to the tendency of the democratic signifier to be co-opted in regimes and discourses that at best replicate what already exists, Gardner underscores ‘the need to seek an alternative politics to democracy.’[23]

Taking this critique into consideration, my thesis attempts to preserve what is useful in Rancière’s definition in order to consider the possibility of a democratic politics without necessarily clinging to the name or signifier of democracy. Rather than devising an answer to the question of the democratic limit, I attempt to rethink the question’s overdependence on a face-value binary of signifier and signified and perhaps rearticulate the democratic limit closer to interrelations of power and desire. Against Gardner who would abandon democracy, because, as appropriated and appropriable signifier, it has historically operated as a vehicle for the legitimisation or the non-alternativity of neoliberalism, I advocate for the preservation of the possibility for democracy, and any other useful concept, to be, however marginally, emancipated from the tyranny of the signifier. Parallel to this intention is my examination (mainly in Chapter 2 and through Félix Guattari’s philosophy) of the complex system of signification and the insistence on the intricate potential relations within and at the margins of signification.[24] Yet, perhaps in line with Gardner, the Rancièrian definition of democracy does not offer adequate co-ordinates for imagining an alternative to neoliberalism. Indeed, apart from the

[21] Ibid., 38.
[22] Ibid., 38.
[23] Ibid., 42-43.
[24] Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
Félix Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955-1971* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015).

commonality of being unaccounted for, it is unclear what this process of dissensus or disagreement would entail so that the democratic subject would come together, identify with the whole of society or shared community, call into question the communal nomos and ultimately have a say in it. But the theory in itself should not be discarded; as this thesis suggests, neither searching for anti-neoliberal co-ordinates nor the aim of establishing a (provisionally) consensual nomos immediately preclude a process of dissensus with any given order or distribution of the sensible.

I use some aspects of Rancière's theory as broader caveats or 'red lines' for my thesis. Gabriel Rockhill considers the 'disagreement' or 'dissensus' instantiated by the Rancièrian political subject to be 'less a clash between heterogeneous phrase regimens or genres of discourse than a conflict between a given distribution of the sensible and what remains outside it.'[25] This warning of the exclusion that can cast the *latently* sensible as non-sensible (perhaps beyond any hierarchies and ruptures within signifier-signified relations) must be kept in proximity. This is more an acknowledgement of a possibility rather than an attempt or plea to alleviate or pre-empt the relevant clash or conflict. Relatedly, what, I argue, should be preserved is the potential for the emergence of a non-preexisting subject which is not based on commonality or identity. For Rancière, community is at play as what is distributed in the form of the sensible following the logic of a 'police order' or a normative logic of allocation, which is always antithetical to the liminal moments of politics and democracy.[26] Criticisms of Rancière's theory have mainly targeted this discarding of the potential for any crystalised, teleological or pre-determined community, which is always to be disrupted by the unaccountable, supplementary part of those who have no part. However, even if, as per Gardner, this state of exception or anomaly that Rancière pinpoints should not be called democracy, and the general aim should be instead a

[25] Gabriel Rockhill, 'Jacques Rancière's Politics of Perception,' introduction to *the Politics of Aesthetics*, by Jacques Rancière, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 4 [emphasis added].
[26] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 148.

radically inclusive or even a whole non-residual society as democratic or as a society of the common, the political potential of those who might remain unaccounted for (in any theorization, thus resting beyond any socially determined commonality) should by no means be precluded or forgotten. At least not until the whole of society finds itself in a consensual utopia.

Rancière sought to distance what is proper about politics from philosophical *a priori* principles that associate it with (ethological) qualifications to govern, as well as from sociological reductions that assign ways of life proper to the political life, foreground 'the community on the basis of a univocal partition of the sensible' and cast democracy as 'the collective effectuation of the properties of a type of man.'[27] This multi-faceted Rancièrian agenda for politics does not have to be sacrificed in an effort to think through and mobilise the principle of the common, both within political but also socio-economic and other terrains. The preservation of the Rancièrian caveat within such an effort would be realisable through the assertion that the demos, or the political subject, is indeed mobilised on the grounds of what Rockhill has called 'the perennial persistence of a *wrong*' that has been done to the demos, even if this wrong 'cannot be resolved by juridical litigation.'[28] The Rancièrian democratic imprint would then direct me to a definition of the common that asserts the democratic process of claiming stakes in the *nemeïn* that founds the communal nomos.

In their book *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century* (published in French in 2014, translated in English in 2019), Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval have explicitly defined the principle of the common as 'self-government' of an institutional form, in the sense of 'the institutions and rules people create' for themselves and their interrelations.[29] The common is understood as

[27] Rancière, *Dissensus*, 41-42.
[28] Rockhill, 'Rancière's Politics,' 3-4.
[29] Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *Commun: Essai sur la Révolution au XXIe Siècle,* Paris: La Découverte, 2014, translated by Matthew MacLellan as *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 414. All subsequent citations are from the French original. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

inextricable from 'the institution of new power structures in society.'[30] This definition distinguishes the common from iterations of self-government as self-determination or self-organisation that have been preoccupied with the management, administration or organisation of affairs, without engaging with or intervening in the framework of the governing rules.[31] For the two authors, the common is the principle of politics *par excellence*, if politics is defined as the collective deliberation towards defining 'what is just' and making according decisions – a deliberation which is 'public' in the sense that anyone can take part in it, regardless of social status or profession.[32] As a political principle, the common is defined away from the necessity of a common 'belonging.' It refers instead to 'political obligation' that is solely ascribable to the 'co-activity' whose participants have co-determined the rules thereof.[33] Dardot and Laval's theorisation of the common is an attempt to imagine an alternative to capitalism, not least through advocating for the limitation of private property via the co-institution of rules of common use. This conception goes beyond the commons as *things* that are used commonly, and away from the idea of the common as an a priori 'common good.'[34] Their conception of the common seeks to do away with both state violence and market competition, through a more democratic participation of workers in the collective rule-making in processes that somehow involve them. Dardot and Laval understand work as 'common action' that also involves moral, cultural and aesthetic aspects.[35] In their understanding, both the basis and end point of work is not individual interest but *co-operation*, which should be instituted as 'unappropriable' through rules that have been shaped collectively.[36] Instituting the unappropriable does not refer to the recognition of an inherent incapacity of work or a kind of work to be appropriated. Rather, it refers to collectively instituting such appropriation as unjust and conversely, such unappropriability

[30] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 414.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 529.
[33] Ibid., 530.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 439.
[36] Ibid.

as just.[37] The apparent contradiction between institution and unappropriability has to do with the subjectivity that institutes, the peculiarities of which I analyse in Chapter 2. It has also to do with Dardot and Laval's advocated shift from a type of appropriation that is always tied to property and belonging to an appropriation that strives towards a 'destination,' understood as 'the satisfaction of social needs.'[38] All in all, the emancipation of labour through the principle of the common forms a key part in the two authors' theory, which combines Marxist and Proudhonian traditions and transverses political, economic and social functions.

Discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the concept of 'instituent praxis' is even more central to one of Dardot and Laval's main theoretical contributions; namely, that the common must be *instituted* rather than left to chance or (historical) spontaneity – a position they attribute to earlier theorisations of the common such as that by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. My thesis sides with Dardot and Laval's viewpoint in that it underlines the importance of autonomy, read closely or etymologically in its pertinence to *nomos*; in other words, as self-governance through the co-creation of rules and institutions. My analysis also attempts to remain faithful to a democratic function, by which a non-pre-existing (and hitherto undeserving) subject intervenes and overthrows the allocated relations of the power to rule, or better yet, the *nemein* of communal *nomos*. From this position (also a political positioning), I elaborate and expand on the potential of the concept of instituent praxis, in its possible contribution as well as contingency in relation to an art historical and theoretical thread that deals with questions of institution and power.

In order to elaborate on the possible limits of instituent praxis as well as some of its aspects (subjectivity, signification, the psyche, rule-making) as potentially taken up by art-related practices, I employ Guattari's thinking. His philosophy features centrally in my argument throughout the thesis, as it provides the

[37] Ibid., 532.
[38] Ibid.

framework from which I critically examine instituent praxis and its possible practical relevance. Dardot and Laval have grounded a large part of their conceptualisation of instituent praxis on Guattari's thinking, although mainly through his earlier writing which has been informed by institutional psychoanalysis. In Chapter 2 but also throughout subsequent chapters, I seek to further this consideration and expand on the echoes of instituent praxis within a Guattarian framework. This forms the main theoretical node from which I develop my critique in the thesis, as attentive to an ontology of the institution in its creative instances, and conducive to a sociopolitical proposition in a nuanced relation to subjectivity and power.

Theory, debates and research questions

In this section, I provide the context for the particular debates and theories against or within which I situate and further problematise parts of my argument. I converse with most of these debates and theories in order to address particular research questions without losing sight of the overarching theoretical node of the thesis inquiry.

Lived realities of institutional absence, crisis, or in some sense, proliferation that have often led to stagnating or irreversible power asymmetries and work exploitation resonate with the historical project of Institutional Critique and the relevant discourse. Upon researching Institutional Critique's methodologies and grounds for exposing or framing institutions, an unresolved or barely formed question seemed to emerge and hover in this artistic discourse: are stagnation, corruption and oppressive concentration of power intrinsic to the (process of) institution? Conversely, is the radical overthrow of oppressive power regimes extrinsic to it? And perhaps there is something to be learnt if this question referred to institution in the abstract, rather than to particular institutions. This could involve both the institution as a general system or regime of legitimate or legitimised affairs but also the process of instituting – the setting up of the institution.

The edited volume *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (2009) that included the writings of Gerald Raunig on 'instituent practices' was of particular relevance to my thesis.[39] Raunig considered artistic and political impasses of the legacy of Institutional Critique through the lens of critical theory, mainly branches and precursors of autonomist Marxism and post-structuralism. He sought to theorise less traditionally art-related or art-historical practices as distanced from both the grip of neoliberalism and outdated (modern) myths of an enlightened and enlightening artistic genius. For Raunig, instituent practices are institutionally critical but also propositional and self-determinant. Raunig as well as Irit Rogoff have referred to Michel Foucault's notion of 'parrhesia' as a particular kind of truth-telling that might help sketch out the ethico-political outline of instituent practice(s).[40] In Chapter 4, I consider Foucault's concept of parrhesia and his related notion of 'Cynicism' from the perspective of instituent praxis.[41]

Raunig's argument also draws on Autonomist Marxism (for instance, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's thought) that sets itself against sovereign state power. Hardt and Negri's theorisation of the tension between 'constituent power' and 'constitution' (as developed in *Commonwealth* and other writings) is also key in Dardot and Laval's critique, which, however, I only came across later on in working on my thesis.[42] Thus, Raunig's context for instituent

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[39] Gerald Raunig, 'Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming,' in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, 3-11 (London: MayFly, 2009);
Gerald Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No. 2: Institutional Critique, Constituent Power, and the Persistence of Instituting,' in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, 173-86 (London: MayFly, 2009).

[40] Raunig, 'Fleeing, Instituting,' 9-11
Irit Rogoff, 'Turning,' in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 45.
Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II; Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983-1984* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[41] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*.

[42] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Operaism or Autonomist Marxism grew together with mass movements mainly in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s and centred upon the refusal of work and workers' autonomy. Post-Operaism refers to the resurgence of Operaist thought in the 1990s. It sought for class emancipatory value within shifts in production brought about by the post-Fordist economy. Some of the main intellectual protagonists are Mario Tronti, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Franco Berardi and Silvia Federici.

practices was initially formative to my thesis, in many respects. However, aspects of the theoretical specificity of Raunig's instituent quality remained obscure and required further research. For instance, the theoretical distance or relation between the instituent and the constituent remained vague. The scope of potential practical relevance of the instituent has also been a point of interest in my thesis. Beyond Raunig's suggested focus (mainly on activist collective practices of a broadly-understood self-organised politics), questions arise regarding whether and how the instituent could be related to practices or concerns within the contemporary (art) world.

A controversy that resonates both with contemporary art institutions and the aims of institutionally critical art has taken the form of an apparent clash between theories that defend the possibility of reclaiming and even transforming already existing (art) institutional schemata and more anti-institutional views that would side with wider institutional exodus. Political theorist Chantal Mouffe, whose work has had broad resonance in the art field, is an advocate of the first category. Mouffe maintains that institutional social spaces should not be abandoned insofar as they operate as sites for conflict and contestation and thus conduce to democratic/agonistic processes.[43] Mouffe also regards autonomist Marxism as – by contrast – condoning withdrawal or 'exodus' from existing institutions in favour of self-organised initiations that should in turn be deserted once they acquire institutional status.[44] In Chapters 1 and 3, I complicate aspects of this debate, against its tendency to loop into a futile inside/outside schematic dichotomy that often detracts from a politically and theoretically sustained set of alternatives.

[43] Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013), 97-103.
[44] Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 99-100. Chantal Mouffe's political thought draws on a philosophical tradition (attributable to Antonio Gramsci), which postulates that the bourgeoisie, i.e. the state and the capitalist class, use institutions to sustain their *hegemonic* position in society. The correlated counter-hegemonic struggle is continuous, often organic and present in all sites of hegemony, including mainstream, representative politics. The latter is a point of contention among the two traditions: Autonomist Marxism opposes (state) representation and advocates for more direct forms of politics.

A typical shortfall in the largely essay-based recent bibliography on the intersections of art institutions, curating and politics is a terminological and/or ontological vagueness around institutions and the *process* of institution. The term 'institution' appears to refer to organisations, social bodies or systems. The edited volume *Institutional Critique and After* attempted to rectify this by fronting philosopher John Searle's essay 'What is an Institution?,' which was first published in the *Journal of Institutional Economics*.[45] Yet, Searle's positive sociolinguistic analysis does not paint the full picture on what is socially and politically at stake with institutions. In some of the art-relevant literature, the *definition* of institution is more adequate, if related in the abstract to a field or ideological apparatus. However, the *politically* creative moments inherent in the process of institution tend to be ignored, sidelined, or assigned to insurrectional functions or concepts that exclude or demote this process.

My thesis attempts a selective mapping of definitional registers of institution, starting from some of the main art historical and theoretical sources of the twentieth century. Chapter 1 delves into mainly western European literature from the late 1960s onwards, whereby key definitional features of institution in their relation to art can be extracted – often laterally – from accounts on European (neo)avant-gardes. For instance, I have revisited Peter Bürger's widely influential study *The Theory of the Avant-garde* (1974, in German).[46] Discussions of Bürger's study have focused on issues and ideas around the early twentieth century avant-gardes and the possibility of avant-garde resurgences in the practice of institutionally critical strands of conceptual art in the second half of the twentieth century. Instead, I have been reading Bürger in terms of a critical ontology of the art institution. Examining such literature resources with a focus on their potential insight on institutional or instituent qualities has been a marginal approach in the relevant bibliography. Piecing together a history of 'extracted' insights on the art institution since the

[45] John R. Searle, 'What is an Institution?,' in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman, (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2006), 21-52, previously published in the *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no.1 (June 2005):1-22.
[46] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

emergence of modern art could be a most useful exercise, but the contribution of this thesis is to reflect on how such insights might work in contemporary art-world settings, including some of the latest articulations and predicaments of its (constitutive) 'outside', through a propositional prism that considers the wider current sociopolitical problematics of institution.

Even though many of the authors I discuss in Chapter 1 have also considered Eastern European avant-gardes in their research, my thesis is largely based on a western or rather 'westernised' discourse, in the sense of the authors' own *assumed* context in their writing rather than their national origin or identity. For instance, in Bürger' argument, the reality of a culture industry permeated by capital relations plays a critical role, when, in state-socialist Eastern European contexts, such permeation does not apply. I want to thereby acknowledge a western *discursive* hegemony that might be obfuscating accounts of social contexts that did not align with the Western art institutional experience.

Alongside Raunig's theory of instituent practices, there are instances whereby the curatorial/art-theoretical discourse converses with the political potential of an instituting process in the contemporary art world. Simon Sheikh advocates for 'instituting differently' and 'insist[ing] on instituting' despite the erosion of institutions.[47] He has substantiated these claims through various justifications, one of which is an insistence on democracy within the policies and structures of art institutions, by invoking Chantal Mouffe's notion of agonism.[48] Sheikh has also employed Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt's 'counter-publics' to consider the art world in terms of a public sphere whereby counter-publics as non-dominant voices could form and claim space for their political realisation.[49]

[47] Simon Sheikh, 'From Para to Post: The Rise and Fall of Curatorial Reason,' *Springerin*, no. 1, 2017, accessed March 17, 2019, https://www.springerin.at/en/2017/1/von-para-zu-post/.
[48] Simon Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions, or, Art and its Publics,' in *Art and its Institutions,* ed. Nina Möntmann (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 149.
[49] Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minessota Press, 1993), quoted in Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions,' 145.

Thus, a large part of my analysis in Chapter 4 considers whether Sheikh's invoked political/theoretical contexts do justice to the complex politics of the concept of institution as an instituting process. This entails a discussion of Sheikh's conception of curatorial articulations within art institutions, through the pertinence of the exhibitionary complex alongside discursive contexts that uphold the production of knowledge. In such context, I critically examine notions of the public as well as invocations to agonism from the perspective of the theory of instituent praxis. Sheikh has also discussed art institutions in relation to Cornelius Castoriadis's notion of the 'radical imaginary', and the related distinction between societies that 'self-institute' autonomously and those that alter themselves in a state of 'heteronomy'.[50] I discuss Castoriadis's ideas further in relation to instituent praxis in Chapter 2.

To build on theoretical agendas that try to imagine instituting otherwise in the world of art, my thesis turns to sociopolitical contributions of institutional ontology that resonate with the current historical condition. Gaps in this latter literature emerge from the uneven accentuation of particular definitional aspects of institution. Schematically, for instance, there is a recurring disjunction between often *sociological conceptions* stressing the determining relation between the reproduction of existing institutional structures and the subject, through the prescription of norms, rules, behavioural patterns or expectations, and *theories that underscore and focus on the potential of institution-making or institution-breaking*, possibly in tandem with specific political understandings of transformation. However, even in theories whereby this apparently irreconcilable disjunction collapses – as, for instance, in Dardot and Laval's – questions can be raised regarding possible limitations in the emancipatory potential of instituent praxis (for example, in terms of instances of power that might elude such potential). The issue of power and its relation to the institution, which the existing literature on instituent practice or praxis

[50] Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 371-373, quoted in Simon Sheikh, 'The Magmas: On Institutions and Instituting,' in *How Institutions Think: Between Contemporary Art and Curatorial Discourse*, ed. Paul O'Neill, Lucy Steeds and Mick Wilson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 126-31.

only partly elucidates, form an underlying research question in my thesis. In this respect, Michel Foucault's later philosophy in *The Courage of Truth* (1984) has been pivotal. He was particularly concerned with the role of power in the 'interplay between the subject and truth,' if power relations are understood 'not as an emanation of a substantial and invasive power, but in the procedures by which people's conduct is governed.'[51] My analysis considers the liminality of power in the theoretical specificity of instituent praxis and expands generatively on such frictions within discourse, not least, through Foucault's notion of parrhesia. I also examine the pertinence of other theorisations of power, such as Castoriadis's distinction between 'explicit' power and 'ground-power' as well as Hardt and Negri's concept of constituent power.[52] My central employment of Guattari's thought is strategic in that it echoes latently Foucault's diffused notion of power that stretches out to sexuality and madness. At the same time, Guattari offers a conceptual as well as terminological framework that could be seen as relatively more propositional than Foucault's in the context of the contemporary period.

Before elaborating on this framework, it should be noted that Foucault's preoccupation with the notion of power has been traditionally read as incompatible with more transformative, emancipatory or propositional articulations, such as Guattari's. However, despite its repressive forms within disciplinary apparatuses, power could also be seen as productive or transformative. This is not simply because power relations fall short of a substantial and invasive emanation. Power relations are also inextricable from the truth-telling and subject-forming aspects of parrhesia – at least in later Foucauldian writing. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, the irreducible link between truth-telling, power relations and the formation of the subject makes a claim to a 'transformation of the self and the world,' through which 'a new style of relation to self, a new type of power relations, and a different regime of truth'

[51] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 8-9.
[52] Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy,' in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 150.

might emerge.[53] In a similar light, Guattari has associated his psychoanalytic thought on desire with Foucault's power:

> [Foucault's] quite distinct notion of power has, if I may say so, the effect of 'pulling' this concept in the direction of desire. It is in this way that he deals with power as a matter that has to do with an investment and not with an 'all or nothing' law. Throughout his entire life, Foucault refused to conceive of power as a reified entity. For him, relations of power and, by consequence, strategic struggles, never amount to being mere objective relations of force. Rather, these relations involve the processes of subjectification in their most essential and irreducible singularity.[54]

Thus, in this thesis, I frame power through Foucault's postulate of diffusion across socio-political institutions / structures and the non-individual subject / self, which is connoted with regimes of truth, ethics and the psyche. At the same time, my exploration of instituent praxis will seek to be situated in relation to the Guattarian reading of Foucault's power as open to productive and transformative moments through processes of subjectification.

I expand on the Guattarian threads already present within the theory of instituent praxis, through upholding a psychoanalytic angle and affective understandings of signification and subjectivity, as well as accentuating the artificiality of instituent praxis. In this, Guattari's conception of the real as artificial becomes key. Reality and artificiality should not be understood as caught up in a debatably postmodern conundrum that would signal the impossibility of determining what is real within an all-encompassing, multiple and fragmented mediatic chaos of (institutional) artificiality. In fact, my thesis departs from the practical hypothesis of this conundrum and employs Guattari's poststructuralist theory to break from the empirical, simplistic articulation of the duality between the real and the artificial. In this context, Guattari's thinking could be seen as elaborating on and advancing the aspect

[53] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 308, 321.
[54] Félix Guattari, 'Microphysics of Power / Micropolitics of Desire,' in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 177.

of instituent praxis that Dardot and Laval have connected with Castoriadis's notion of an instituting radical imaginary. The underlying question here is not about deciphering real instances, struggles, identities against artificial ones, but rather, framing the real as essentially crafted and curatable and pondering upon the complexities of a self-determining potential within the significational artifice of subjectivity and instituent praxis.

More broadly, the theory of instituent praxis together with Guattarian philosophy open up a framework for rethinking the production of subjectivity alongside the artificial and within a politics adjacent to autonomy. This examination inhabits the remit of the art world and its coextensive parameters of discourse, curatorial and organisational paradigms, labour conditions, and institutional, administrative or algorithmic infrastructure. My thesis implicates the art world as distinct from, but also potentially paradigmatic of, a broader social practice that could resonate with an economics of the artificial, understood as a speculative and propositional remit for instituent praxis and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Possible limitations to this are also examined in a fashion that critically articulates predicaments within contemporary capitalism, ranging from new facets of corporate/technological concentration of power and psychosocial relapses to authoritarianism and fascism to recuperations of aesthetic and critical modalities performed by alternative or experimental institutional formats. Chapter 6, the final chapter of the thesis before Conclusions, considers the self-determining potential of the micro-management and channeling of visibility, signification and legitimisation (all aspects akin to the artificiality of instituent praxis) in alter-institutional or para-institutional practices. In such context, the chapter also considers the possibilities of fascistic tropes and permutations as close to the para-institutional or as possibly presenting a challenge to the framework of instituent praxis.

Methodology and structure

My methodological approach synthesises literary overview, textual analysis, interviews and research *in situ* in cases of selected case studies and close examination of art institutions and other projects. The first two chapters of the thesis employ literary overviews as well as close readings and analysis of theoretical texts. The last four chapters combine case-study-based approaches with theoretical analyses.

Chapter 1 critically constructs a thread of understandings of the concept of institution in its relation to art by tracing pivotal accounts from art history and theory from the 1960s onwards. It begins with Peter Bürger's theorisation of the institution of art and its relation to the question of art and life as it was raised through European avant-garde movements of the twentieth century. Subsequently, it examines accounts of art historians associated with the *October* journal (Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloh) and of feminist artist Andrea Fraser, who have been more or less central figures in the discourse (and practice) of Institutional Critique.[55] The aim is to address the definitional gaps that arise when the institution of art is discussed and delineated in relation to European avant-garde art movements and the potential reemergence of avant-garde features in Institutional Critique. This analysis is by no means exhaustive of the discourse that has discussed the art institution as such or through its relation to the European avant-gardes of the twentieth century. Instead, it revisits renowned parts of western art discourse in order to extract generative discrepancies between takes on the institutional that will orientate the subsequent sociopolitical discussion.

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[55] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996);
Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,' *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105-43, accessed May 11, 2016, https://www.jstor.org/stable/778941;
Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,' in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman, 123-136 (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2006).

Chapter 2 moves from art discourse to sociopolitical theory and places the focus on the concept of instituent praxis. The relation of the instituent and the constituent is discussed through a critique on Hardt and Negri's concept of constituent power. I present Dardot and Laval's meticulous and rigorous theoretical construction of the concept of instituent praxis, as an emancipatory one. In this construction, they are critiquing and repurposing Cornelius Castoriadis's theory and his concepts of instituent power or ground-power, the social-historical and the (radical) imaginary. They are also centrally implicating Karl Marx's ideas on the relation between subjectivity and praxis as well as Castoriadis's configuration of this relation that also involves autonomy. In order to outline the pertinence of subjectivity within instituent praxis, Dardot and Laval employ Guattari's framework of institutional psychoanalysis, mainly through his book *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*. I expand critically on some of the specific aspects of instituent praxis, such as its postulation of new significations and its pertinence to a Guattarian subjectivity, through later Guattarian philosophy (mainly in *Chaosmosis*). In this context, I elaborate on Guattari's concepts of autopoiesis, heterogenesis and the machinic. I also address the artificiality of instituent praxis and its possible channeling within the current techno-political system of signification.

Chapter 3 aims at articulating the potential synergic scope of reach for the instituent and/or for instituent praxis. At this point, my analysis starts focusing on the terrain of art institutions and considers counter-claims to and misconceptions of institutional exodus. The issue of work is brought to the fore, through arguments regarding the 'back office' of art institutions. However, this examination is one that widens the co-ordinates for the instituent, through exploring functions of work and administration and tracing their relation to notions of creation and subjectivity. In relation to this, algorithmic governance is interrogated as well as the institution's relation to infrastructure. This widening of the co-ordinates for the instituent aims at sparking off the perspective of a contemporary economics of artificiality, if economics point towards both nemein (distributing) and nomos. In this, the politics and theory

of instituent praxis can play a crucial role that involves a particular configuration of the relation between desire, machinic subjectivity and code.

Chapter 4 considers overlaps between instituent praxis, discourse and discursive practices through a focus on pedagogical/discursive practices diversely situated within or at the fringes of the art world. Raunig's instituent practices have often been discussed as pertaining to Foucault's notion of parrhesia, i.e. a certain function of speaking truth to power in and through self-knowledge, thus possibly annotating such practices with a discursive aspect. Curatorial or art institutional practice has also been framed as not necessarily yielding to power as control, through a possible implication with the production of public or democratic formations. I consider approaches that have used the concept of the public and some of its theoretical iterations, which might be seen as challenging the theory of instituent praxis and its appeal to the production of subjectivity. I also return to Foucault's theory around parrhesia and Cynicism in *The Courage of Truth* and cross-examine it with the theory of instituent praxis and in relation to a contemporary context of discursive imperatives and curatorial/institutional practices. In these debates, I seek to emphasise the role of affective knowledge as posited by instituent praxis as well as Guattari's theory of affect and signification. Relatedly, I also seek to identify and interrogate possible limits to certain aspects of instituent praxis.

In Chapter 5, I seek to further and complicate a well-established and predominantly western discourse that identifies and puts a spotlight on art institutions that present an experimental or alternative character against dominant oppressive or capitalist tendencies in the art world. At the same time, I attempt to address the ways in which the geopolitical parameters of the case-study selection in my thesis could be informed through the lens of instituent praxis. I employ the concept of the semi-periphery, as a key mechanism at play in terms of geopolitical asymmetries and power relations among European regions, while I discuss the concept's responsiveness towards some of the challenges posed by the theory of instituent praxis. In this reconfigured context, I examine case studies from European semi-peripheries that have

only marginally been researched, if at all, within academic art-historical discourse. Main points of my analysis are the relation of the semi-periphery to affective understandings of infrastructure, the questioning of reductive economic approaches and the synthesis of a framework that attends to the production of collective subjectivities in the context of the instituent.

Chapter 6 considers particularities of institutional iterations such as alternative institutions, para-institutions and mock-institutions, by focusing on practices that take forms of activism while maintaining an ambiguous relation to the art world, and thereby, to reality. The aim is to examine these particularities through configurations of the imaginary, the real and the artificiality of instituent praxis. For instance, the New World Summit features centrally as an artistic/political project that experiments with the reality of alternative parliaments and notions of stateless democracy. The latter could be seen as potentially informative both in contexts where the actuality of parliamentarism is relatively assumed *and* in so-called older democracies whose realities still tend towards authoritarian totalities. A sub-theme that emerges is the micro-management of signification and the visible and its potential pertinence to deontology and processes of legitimisation. Another facet of this examination addresses the possible political variations of para-institutional iterations that might aspire to parrhesia and yet mutate into perverted psychosocial functions.

1. The (Art) Institutional: The Search for Definition within Art Historical/Theoretical Accounts

> 'The Greeks had discovered the phusis/nomos (nature/institution-convention) distinction and had already put it into practice by changing their institutions. But their most important philosophies stopped short of using it, obviously – at least in the case of Plato – out of fear of opening the way to 'arbitrariness' and freedom.'[1]

In this first chapter, I seek to locate definitional aspects of the institution within key art historical and theoretical readings of the European artistic (neo)avant-gardes. The aim is to retrieve pertinent readings of the relation between institution and art that can ultimately point to what is at stake in a contemporary understanding of the institutional and its theoretical potential within an expanded field of practice that includes art, curating and organisational work. I employ a thread of accounts mainly from the 1960s onwards, beginning with Peter Bürger's theorisation of the institution of art through his viewpoint of the intent of European artistic avant-gardes in the early twentieth century.

Art as institution and the intent of the European avant-garde(s)

Peter Bürger's landmark study *Theory of the Avant Garde*, first published in German in 1974, is among the first to have offered a thorough analysis and elaborate theorisation of art as an institution. The Marxist theorist developed some of his ideas on the institution of art in his later essay 'The Institution of

[1] Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary,' in *The Castoriadis Reader*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 320.

'Art' as a Category in the Sociology of Literature' (1985) which includes a detailed presentation of key attributes of art when approached as an institution.

> Art as institution [conveys] the general views about art (definitions of function) which prevail in a society (or in particular classes) in their social contingency. It is assumed that these definitions of function are connected with the material and spiritual needs of the public and that they stand in a definable relationship to the *material conditions of the production and reception of art*. Mediated by aesthetic norms, definitions of the function crystallize on the side of the producers in and through the artistic material, on the side of the recipients through the establishment of attitudes of reception.[2]

Bürger makes it clear that he is not referring to 'mediating agencies' or 'establishments such as publishing, the book-trade, the theatre and museums which mediate between the individual work and the public'.[3] Rather, he associates the institution of art with the 'manner which regulates the commerce with works […] in a given society'; a category that conditions – without however being reducible to – the production and reception of art in its social contingency.[4] Thus, for Bürger, the institution of art amounts to the *prevalent definition* of the social function of art in its social and historical contingency. Bürger's definition can be better grasped through his lengthy analysis of the historical specificity of the institution of art in bourgeois society. He argues that in 'developed bourgeois society' whose chronological emergence is situated at the end of the eighteenth century, the defining characteristic of the institution of art or the prevalent definition of art's social function is its 'autonomy status'.[5] Autonomy is hereby understood as the dissociation of 'creation' from societal purposes and interests such as religion or other regimes of patronage.[6] Bürger is not simply referring to works of art or artists which he sees as gradually becoming less subservient to social or political entities. Rather, the

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[2] Peter Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art" as a Category in the Sociology of Literature,' *Cultural Critique*, No. 2 (Winter 1985:1986): 8, accessed January 18, 2017, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354199. [emphasis in the original]
[3] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 7
[4] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 12
[5] Ibid., Iii
[6] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 9

dissociation from societal purposes is applied to what he calls 'the entity of "art" as a sphere of non-purposive creation and disinterested pleasure […] contrasted with the life of society which it seems to be the task of the future to order rationally and in strict orientation toward definable goals'.[7] Unlike theorists before him who approached artistic autonomy through particular artists or works, Bürger locates in developed bourgeois society the emergence of the possibility for art to exist as a separate sphere or indeed as a distinct institution. The sphere of art is seen as dissociated from the life of society or what Bürger elsewhere calls the 'praxis of life'.[8] What defines the praxis of life or the life of society is a 'means-end' rationality by which the 'citizen has been reduced to a partial function', through the division of labour and all-pervading competition.[9] As Bürger emphatically states, 'values such as humanity, joy, solidarity are extruded from life as it were, and preserved in art'.[10] The citizen who is reduced to a partial function 'can be discovered in art as a "human being".'[11] Thus, the institution of art is 'burdened with the demand that it be an alternative to the real world which it can only be when it is opposed to that world as the wholly other'.[12]

It is important to stress that this is a picture of art painted by philosophers and theorists of modernity and their conceptions on the function of art in bourgeois society. Bürger is very explicit about the fact that he is tracing *prevalent* definitions of the function of art within formulations that could be seen as epochal landmarks 'via the romantic conception of art and all the way to Aestheticism.'[13] For instance, he suggests that art was seen as 'the *only* possible sphere in which man's lost wholeness could be recovered' in the context of the writings of late Enlightenment and early Romanticism theorists

[7] Ibid.
[8] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 48
[9] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 48-50
Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 11. Bürger refers to the means-end rationality in both texts; the competition aspect in the first text (*Theory*) and the division of labour in the second ('Institution').
[10] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 50.
[11] Ibid., 48.
[12] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 12.
[13] Ibid., 14. I discuss Aestheticism further in subsequent pages.

such as Karl Phillipp Moritz and Friedrich Schiller who critiqued the means-end rationality of society or what came to be called 'alienation'.[14] Bürger points out that art's investment with values such as humanity, joy and solidarity is concurrent with the 'period when essential fundamental principles of developing bourgeois society (means-end rationality and the division of labor) were being recognized.'[15] The 'nexus' that Bürger posits between 'the critique of alienation and the concept of autonomous art' at a specific historical moment is to a large extent convincing. [16] Which is however the precise modality of art's *institutionalisation* as autonomous?

Bürger is crucially arguing that the institutionalisation of art as autonomous in bourgeois society is 'ideological', or 'affirmative.'[17] He draws on Herbert Marcuse's essay 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' (1937) and the concept of affirmation to describe the way art has been institutionalised in bourgeois society.[18] According to Bürger (and Marcuse), affirmation rests on a contradiction. On the one hand, bourgeois culture (art, in Bürger) is critical to social conditions in that it presents or allows the imagination of an unalienated realm which contradicts and 'protests against' actual reality.[19] On the other hand, 'bourgeois culture' (or art) 'exiles humane values to the realm of the imagination' which is 'detached from reality through the medium of aesthetic semblance (*Schein*)' and thereby, the realisation of such values remains 'precluded'.[20] As art is 'detached from daily life,' the experience of the 'self as personality' that art offers 'remains without tangible effect, i.e., it cannot be integrated into that life.'[21] Bürger describes this contradictory condition thusly:

> To make it possible for art to be the advocate of humanity in a society in whose actual life-process humanity is not realized, art is institutionalized as autonomous. […] To the extent that the

[14] Ibid., 11. [emphasis added]
[15] Ibid., 11.
[16] Ibid., 14.
[17] Ibid., 13.
[18] Herbert Marcuse, 'The Affirmative Character of Culture,' in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, 65-98 (London: MayFly, 2009).
[19] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 11.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 13.

> critique of society and of its means-ends rationality, which is institutionalized as a deceptive experience of harmony, simultaneously undercuts the possibility of its realization, it is ideological or, to use Marcuse's concept, affirmative.[22]

The idea that the institution of art has a social function begins to unravel. Bürger suggests that the status of autonomy does not render the institution of art 'functionless' nor does it entail complete independence from society.[23] Rather, the institution of art is 'the fully developed partial sphere which functions according to its own rules' *and* 'remains dependent on the larger society on behalf of which it takes on certain tasks'[24] or 'functions […] which cannot be exercised, or exercised adequately, by other institutions.'[25] Alluding to the aforementioned process of affirmation, Bürger considers 'the specific function of art in bourgeois society' to be 'the neutralization of critique' whilst becoming humanity's 'advocate'.[26] It is important to note that Bürger regards the institution of art as having an 'effect' in the sense of the 'shaping influence an institutionalized conception of art has on the production and reception of works'.[27] This will be further discussed in relation to Aestheticism and the European avant-garde movements of the twentieth century.

Bürger considers 'Aestheticism' to be a culmination of the autonomous institution of bourgeois art.[28] All bourgeois art is seen as severed from the life praxis at least in terms of form. However, Bürger regards Aestheticism as that stage in the development of bourgeois art whereby its 'apartness from the praxis of life' becomes its content.[29] Art is rendered tautological, self-reflecting and self-referential (i.e. art for art itself).[30] Art in Aestheticism no longer claims to refer to or interpret the praxis of life and thereby voids itself of all means-end rationality. In this light, one might be tempted to think of it (art) as a sphere

[22] Ibid., 13,15.
[23] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 10.
[24] Ibid., 15.
[25] Ibid., 10.
[26] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 13.
[27] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 10.
[28] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 49.
[29] Ibid., 48.
[30] Ibid.

of pure promise that carries the potential to restore humanity's values in the realm of social life. However, in accordance with Bürger's logic of affirmation, Aestheticism (and all bourgeois art for that matter) is inherently incapable of *fulfilling* any such promise since it is detached from the realm of life and needed remain so, if it were to claim the aforementioned potential. Thus, bourgeois art as the autonomous institution whose autonomy culminates in Aestheticism can be seen as affirmative.

Interestingly though, Bürger thinks of Aestheticism as the 'necessary precondition' for the work and intent of the avant-garde to formulate.[31] He argues that the European avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century sought to reconnect the autonomous institution of art with the praxis of life.[32] Refusing to take refuge in the autonomous yet affirmative institution of art, the avant-garde wished to destroy this autonomy and reconnect art and life to the point of their complete indistinctness. As Bürger maintains, the avant-gardist intent to create a 'new life praxis' could not have been formulated without Aestheticism's previous negation of the means-end rationality of the current life praxis.[33] Importantly, Bürger suggests that the avant-garde intent was to 'sublate' the art institution rather than destroy it: 'art was not to be simply destroyed, but transferred to the praxis of life where it would be preserved, albeit in a changed form.'[34] This meant that the praxis of life itself would have to be radically re-organised 'from a basis in art'.[35]

Notably, Bürger discusses Marcel Duchamp's art practice as paradigmatic of the avant-gardist intent to eliminate the distinction between art and life by negating both the individuality of the production and reception of art and the distinction between them. Duchamp's readymades were randomly selected mass-produced objects, signed by Duchamp (with pseudonyms) and exhibited (or proposed to be exhibited) in art shows. Bürger regards the readymades as

[31] Ibid., 49-50.
[32] Ibid., 49.
[33] Ibid., 49-50.
[34] Ibid., 49.
[35] Ibid.

'manifestations' which sought to expose the art market by proving that 'the signature means more than the quality of the work'.[36] More importantly, he sees them as provocations towards 'individual creativity' and the assumed category of the genius through the juxtaposition of the signature, which indicates an exhibited individual creation, and the mass-produced object, which blatantly precludes individual production.[37] Furthermore, Bürger assigns a collective aspect to the shock provoked by Duchamp's manifestations to the public.[38] He sees the shock reaction of the public as diametrically opposed to an individualised reception pertinent for instance to aestheticist art. Bürger also asserts that the avant-garde vision challenges the distinction of production and reception and that such a challenge is exemplified in the recipe character found in artists' written instructions for writing Dadaist poems or automatic texts.[39] Duchamp's '*Specifications for "Readymades*"' could be added here, in the context of Duchamp's work *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even* (*The Green Box*) in 1934.[40] Bürger finds in the recipe aspect of the artists' writings a call to 'activity on the part of the recipient.'[41] Such activity would not indicate a shift to the separate side of 'artistic production'; rather, it would become 'part of a liberating life praxis'. In this sense, the division between producers and receivers is no longer valid as everyone is active in producing the liberating life praxis.

What has become then of the avant-garde vision that emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century and where does it leave the autonomous institution of art in bourgeois society? Bürger maintains that the way Duchamp's 'manifestations' functioned within the art institution eventually cancelled out their intended effect.[42] Duchamp's readymades would soon be accepted as art objects worthy of exhibition. Thus, there would no longer be a contradiction in

[36] Ibid., 52.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 53.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Duchamp here shares performative instructions on how to make a readymade.
[41] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 53.
[42] Ibid., 52.

them being both signed art exhibits and mass-produced objects. Without this contradiction, the readymades can no longer provoke. Bürger contends that the avant-garde movements failed irreversibly to connect art and life in a new liberating praxis.[43] In a somewhat circular logic, he associates this failure with the inherent affirmative function of the autonomous institution of art that 'prevents the contents of works that press for radical change in a society (i.e., the abolition of alienation) from having any practical effect'.[44] Richard Murphy has described it very concisely: 'any social or political content is instantly neutralized when the work of art is received as a purely ''imaginative'' product, an aesthetic illusion that need not be taken seriously.'[45] Furthermore, since Bürger thinks the avant-garde's failure is 'irreversible' as soon as its gestural negation is 'accepted as *art'*, he regards any neo-avant-garde attempt as not only affirmative but 'inauthentic' too: 'having been shown to be irredeemable, the claim to be protest can no longer be maintained'.[46] Bürger also refers to 'pulp fiction and commodity aesthetics' as loci where we find a 'false sublation of autonomous art'; art and life have been reconnected without resulting in a new liberating praxis.[47] Such a reconnection takes place through the 'total tailoring of production to the socially produced "false" needs of recipients'.[48] Bürger concludes that this is the only way art and life can be reconnected in bourgeois society and in this light, in a statement that might seem contradictory to his overall theory, he favours preserving the autonomy of the institution:

> Given the experience of the false sublation of autonomy, one will need to ask whether a sublation of the autonomy status can be desirable at all, whether the distance between art and the praxis of life is not requisite for that free space within which alternatives to what exists become conceivable.[49]

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[43] Ibid., Iii.
[44] Ibid., 95.
[45] Richard Murphy*, Theorizing the Avant-Garde. Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity*, Literature, Culture, Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 10, accessed February 12, 2017, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511483189.
[46] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 52-53.
[47] Ibid., 54.
[48] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 30.
[49] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 54.

Decades later, in 2010, Bürger writes an article-long response to his critics, concluding as follows:

> I pointed out that the most lucid avant-gardists were themselves aware of the extravagance of their project to revolutionize everyday practices and hence recognized its unrealizability. […] On the other hand, I also suggested that the failure of an historical project should not be equated with a lack of effectiveness and importance. Measured against their goals and the hopes that they carried, all revolutions have failed: this fact does not lessen their historical significance.[50]

Relatedly, in the same essay Bürger writes: 'The difficulty of fulfilling this demand underscores how far removed the avant-garde's impulse to transform real social relationships is from us today. This does not exclude, but rather includes, the possibility that the avant-garde could gain a renewed relevance in a future that we cannot imagine.'[51] Arguably, the echo of optimism in these later responses regarding the (future) potential of the avant-garde does not indicate a shift in Bürger's position. Rather, it accentuates the determining role of historicity for the social function of the institution of art as well as the avant-garde intent and action. Such historicity has fundamentally informed Bürger's theoretical formulations around the institution of art in bourgeois society. For Bürger, the failure of the avant-garde had to do with the aforementioned neutralisation of social and political content as well as affirmation and its hidden character – all of which are idiomatic of the era of bourgeois society (and are discussed in subsequent sections). Thus, Bürger continues to hold the view according to which the historical avant-garde movements failed *irreversibly* to sublate the institution of art; the institution's autonomy remained intact as it transformed and stretched so as to accommodate the avant-garde manifestations as art.[52]

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[50] Peter Bürger, 'Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of "*Theory of the Avant-Garde*",' in 'What is an Avant-Garde?,' ed. Jonathan P. Eburne and Rita Felski, special issue, *New Literary History* 41, no. 4 (Autumn 2010): 700, accessed May 3, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23012702.

[51] Bürger, 'Attempt to Answer,' 714.

[52] Bürger, 'Attempt to Answer,' 705-06.

Preliminary note on the concept of the norm and its relation to the institution

As the definition of the institution by Bürger states, the institution of art as the socially contingent definitions of the function of art is *mediated by* aesthetic norms. In bourgeois society, he regards the autonomous work of art as overthrowing its subjection to norms in the sense of rules while it 'aspires to being judged by the rules it lays down itself'.[53] This is again in direct antithesis with courtly-feudal society where art was produced according to 'institutionalized aesthetic norms'.[54] Furthermore, as Bürger suggests, there is a social aspect to the concept of the norm, which is in a dialectical relation to the aesthetic one and conditions the work of art.[55] As in bourgeois society the autonomous work of art tends to overthrow the concept of the norm, Bürger thinks that it should be able to upset the 'sphere of social norms' and possibly lead to the eventual collapse of the institution of art.[56] However, according to Bürger, bourgeois society only allows criticism to the extent that it remains within the spectrum of 'relative inefficacy'.[57] Therefore, regarding social norms he suggests that 'the concept of autonomous art makes possible their discussion *as part of* the work. This renders them innocuous but also enlarges the scope of the work vis-à-vis prevailing ideas and norms.'[58]

This further elucidates Bürger's conception of the mechanism through which the institution neutralises social and political content, including the manifestations of the historical avant-garde: 'in recognizing these manifestations as art works and acknowledging their value in the development of modern art, the art institution retracts its claim to establish norms.'[59] Bürger is hereby referring to the historical association of aesthetic norms to epochs and periods, that used to be a correlate of the art institution and that fades with

[53] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 23.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 24.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid. [emphasis added]
[59] Bürger, 'Attempt to Answer,' 707.

the failure of the historical avant-garde. The only norm that the art institution maintains thereafter is its aesthetic autonomy, which, according to Bürger, is a social one:

> In retreating to its core domain of aesthetic autonomy, the art institution demonstrates a resistance to the attack of the avant-gardes, yet also adopts avant-garde practices. Seen in this light, the failure of the avant-garde's aspirations to alter social reality and its internal aesthetic success (the artistic legitimation of avant-garde practices) are two sides of the same coin.[60]

Bürger is right to tackle the concept of the norm and his analysis is not misguided in identifying an enlargement in the scope of the work. However, the articulation that autonomous works of art are 'no longer governed by any aesthetic (implicitly or explicitly socially determined) norm' seems questionable outside its initial context of opposition to courtly-feudal society and patronage. The articulation is doubtful both in the case of the historical avant-garde and in the case of later art, predominantly because it places a compulsory/inescapable aspect to the concept of the norm while, arguably, norms are essentially different to rules. That the autonomous work of art aspires to be judged by the norms it lays down itself does not exclude the possibility of the work's governance by norms too. As it will be suggested, autonomous art has always been governed by norms and the type of governance exerted by norms pertaining to the institution of art needs to be further examined. An initial hypothesis would be that norms in the post-historical-avant-garde condition are of a different kind: indeed, not visual features of objects that would normally grant them artwork ontology, nor aesthetic norms inextricably associated with and attributable to historical periods but micro-streams of qualities (conceptual, material and formal, discursive and significational, managerial, economic,) that appear relevant or timely within the field of (current) artistic (visual/aural/literary/etc) production.

[60] Ibid.

The autonomy of the institution of art and the question of art and life

Bürger has emphatically argued that the 'category *art as institution'* became 'recognizable after the avant-garde movements had criticized the autonomy status of art in developed bourgeois society.'[61] He has also suggested that the 'bourgeois institution "art" survived both the attack of the historical avant-garde movements (that uncovered the institution's functional mode) and the development of the possibilities of mass reproduction' and that this resilience disproves the assumption that 'to enlighten others about the functioning of an ideological institution will necessarily result in that institution's collapse.'[62] Is it not however precisely the *hidden* quality of affirmation that allows it to operate? Bürger has suggested that the hidden character of affirmation is similar to the way the state operates in 'late-capitalist society': in order for the state to 'fulfill its function' of 'securing the investment interests of capital' it needs to *conceal* that function and implement 'social measures' that in principle contradict the function.[63] Thus, if the avant-garde indeed enlightened others about the process of affirmation and therefore effaced its hidden quality, why did it not automatically annihilate the ideological mechanism altogether? Arguably, questions should be raised regarding both the actual remit of outreach of the function of affirmation and the validity of Bürger's viewpoint of the intentions and illuminations of the historical avant-garde. I discuss first, the former issues and subsequently, the latter, in relation to pertinent critiques of other authors.

Without himself formulating a theory of aesthetics, aesthetic theories occupy a predominant – if not exclusive – position within Bürger's traced ideological framework for the institution of art, as he identifies prevalent definitions of the social function of art from such theories. In this light, he has been critiqued for 'equating' the 'institutional frame' with 'aesthetic theory' and for disregarding the significance of 'physical institutions such as school, university, academies,

[61] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Iii [emphasis in original] I return to the meaning of this statement and its implications in subsequent sections.
[62] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 14.
[63] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 13.

museums, etc.' to the 'functioning of art'.[64] In turn, Bürger has responded that even though aesthetic theories are no longer (1980) the 'exclusive domain of philosophers' and 'the ideas they formulate enter the heads of producers of art and their publics by way of various mediating instrumentalities (school, especially the *Gymnasium*, the university, literary criticism, and literary histories, to name just a few)', aesthetic theory comprises 'prevailing ideas about art in the most developed form' and therefore, the examination of such theory is of primal importance.[65] He adds that 'it is precisely when one assumes that art is institutionalized as ideology in developed bourgeois society that its critique must engage its most developed exemplification'.[66] Thus, theory is seen as an exemplification and a full-blown development of prevalent ideas with which any critique should seek to engage.

Against his constructed ideological framework that draws from the Enlightenment to Aestheticism – including Valéry's writings in 1926, Bürger seems to posit a neo-Marxist framework (to which himself belongs) that recognised and theorised the ideological mechanism at play, after the avant-garde movements had rendered it recognisable.[67] Marcuse's essay 'The Affirmative Character of Culture', written as early as 1937 and anchored to a long pre-existing Marxist tradition, perplexes and nuances the determinants of a *prevalence* of theory that is concerned with the social function of art. In other words, can it be accurately argued that affirmation continues to operate based on its hidden quality, after the avant-garde (supposedly) sheds light on the ideological function of the institution of art, Marcuse's and other materialist writings begin to be relatively influential and Bürger's adaptation of affirmation in relation to art as institution is put into blatant words? Arguably, critical sociology that seeks to restore a materialist perspective to a pure idealist one often operates within a methodology that makes it assume a privileged, exclusive insight into a broadly concealed reality. Such assumption has

[64] Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 98.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 14.

historically operated in tandem with another assumption: that as a tradition and methodology it never becomes the predominant one – rather, it remains marginal and obscure. However, could it not be reasonably counterargued that the viewpoint of the materialist, anti-idealist critical sociology – at least as employed by Marcuse in relation to culture – has become if not the prevalent, one of the prevalent definitions of the social function of art? An adequate answer to such a question would obviously require entire bodies of dedicated historical research, but an indicative critique can be found in Susan Sontag's essay 'The Literary Criticism of Georg Lukács' (1965) that preceding Bürger's writings already attests to the remit of contested wake caused by the legacy of German neo-Marxist criticism:

> […] both the strength and the limitation of the Marxist approach to art arise from it is commitment to a "higher point of view." There is no question in the writings of the critics I have cited (the early Lukács, Benjamin, Adorno, etc.) of a narrow forcing of art per se into the service of a particular moral or historical tendency. But none of these critics, even at their best, are free of certain notions which in the end serve to perpetuate an ideology that, for all its attractiveness when considered as a catalogue of ethical duties, has failed to comprehend in other than a dogmatic and disapproving way the texture and qualities, the peculiar vantage point, of contemporary society.[68]

Through Sontag's criticism I do not seek to endorse a liberal context for art. However, the higher point of view that she mentions has been the focus of criticism by post-structural and post-modern authors that I employ centrally in my thesis, who, rather than aligning with a liberal approach, complicate further the Marxist tradition. Sontag's viewpoint only serves here to suggest that the outreach regarding the function of affirmation has been more widespread than Bürger would have it, at least at the time of his writing. The questions this hypothesis would raise (apart from the ones regarding the avant-garde's intents and revelations) have to do with the ambivalent applicability of the concept of affirmation to the category of art as institution and its potentially ad

[68] Susan Sontag, 'The Literary Criticism of Georg Lukács,' in *Against Interpretations and Other Essays* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 90.

hoc attachment to the intent of the historical avant-garde. The historical occurrence of the neutralisation of social and political content, as Bürger describes it in relation to the workings of the avant-garde, seems to be pre-destined since it is interpreted and defined through the uninterruptable self-perpetuity of the function of affirmation, a concept that Marcuse inextricably associated with a specific conceptualisation of culture as it emerged in bourgeois society. This conceptualisation dissociates culture from the concept of civilization, turns it against the material conditions of social reproduction and attaches it to eternal and ahistorical values such as specific concepts of 'soul'.[69] Could Bürger's theoretical formulations around the categorically hidden nature of the affirmative be thwarting or precluding historical shifts towards what he has referred to as a 'future that we cannot imagine'? Hal Foster's analysis which I discuss further considers the possibility that Bürger's position is too deterministic as it constructs a lineage that pre-empts the failure of the avant-garde.

Returning to Bürger's main theses, the German theorist asserts that the institution of art amounts to the prevalent definitions of the function of art in its social contingency. In bourgeois society, the prevalent definition of art's function refers to the institutionalisation of art's autonomy as a critique of alienation and the means-end rationality of everyday life praxis. Examining closely Marcuse's writings on the affirmative character of culture from which Bürger is directly taking his cue, it becomes clear that the former author is referring to 'objects of art' as bearers of the 'medium of beauty' whose realm is situated well beyond the realm of the everyday:

> The culture of souls absorbed in a false form those forces and wants which could find no place in everyday life. The cultural ideal assimilated men's longing for a happier life: for humanity, goodness, joy, truth, and solidarity. […] They are either internalized as the duty of the individual soul (to achieve what is constantly betrayed in the external existence of the whole) or represented as objects of art (whereby their reality is relegated to a realm essentially different from that of everyday life). […] The

[69] Marcuse, 'Affirmative Character,' 70-83.

> medium of beauty decontaminates truth and sets it apart from the present.[70]

In a different passage Marcuse writes: 'Only in the medium of ideal beauty, in art, was happiness permitted to be reproduced as a cultural value in the totality of social life.'[71] Marcuse emphasises the exclusive association of the sphere of art with great art as the medium of ideal beauty in bourgeois society as opposed to everyday, so-called low-brow, trivial or folk art which is excluded from such a sphere. Even though Bürger does not refer to ideal beauty, Marcuse's description fits Bürger's in that the distance from the everyday or everyday life praxis is only diminished through a false or 'bad' sublation in terms of the culture industry.[72] Marcuse too comments on culture that integrates with 'material life' processes in a false 'abolition of its affirmative character':

> The integration of culture into the material life process is considered a sin against the mind and the soul. As a matter of fact, its occurrence would only make explicit what has long been in effect blindly, since not only the production but also the reception of cultural goods is already governed by the law of value. […] Happiness is calculated at the outset with regard to its utility just as the chance of profit is weighed in relation to risk and cost. It is thus smoothly integrated into the economic principle of this society.[73]

Importantly, Marcuse does not deny that such culture involves *fulfilled* (as opposed to desired) happiness and gratification, even if they are seen as pre-planned and calculated as utility. As regards the 'real abolition of affirmative culture,' Marcuse states that it 'must appear utopian,' if the 'status quo' is to be preserved.[74] Nonetheless, he attempts a few predictions and observations:

> A foretaste of such potentialities [culture as real 'fulfillment' and no longer as 'desire'] can be had in experiencing the unassuming display of Greek statues or the music of Mozart or late Beethoven. […] Every attempt to sketch out the counterimage of

[70] Ibid., 84.
[71] Ibid., 87.
[72] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 29.
[73] Marcuse, 'Affirmative Character,' 96.
[74] Ibid.

> affirmative culture comes up against the ineradicable cliché about the fools' paradise. It would be better to accept this cliché than the one about the transformation of the earth into a gigantic community center, which seems to be at the root of some theories of culture.[75]

It is telling that Marcuse does not even remotely refer to any art of his time as attesting to such foretaste and, admittedly, his reference to the Greek statues, Mozart and Beethoven is brief and without elaboration. His reference to the fool's paradise comes across as the most representative of his overall viewpoint and at least in this respect he is being more faithful than Bürger to his utopian sketching of art or culture's horizon in the context of bourgeois society. Bürger's elevation of the historical avant-garde's intent and workings to a utopian position and the subsequent failure and condemnation to irreversible unrealisability, if examined against the Marcusian background, betray a sense of methodological mannerism adapted to suit the anxieties of the time of writing and, therefore, the related assumptions require further interrogation.

However, the extent to which the aspect of the distance, separation or false sublation between the everyday praxis of life and the sphere of art should be considered as the definitionally prevalent element of the institution of art is contestable. As Bürger himself has already implied in relation to the post-historical-avant-garde condition, the rise of mass-reproduction and the pervasiveness of entertainment has eroded art's autonomy as critique of alienation to the extent that such autonomy is now in danger of extinction and therefore, desirable, as the second-best alternative following the irreversible purging of the possibility of sublation. If it is granted that the post-avant-garde condition still falls within a historical periodisation of bourgeois society, the question of whether the autonomy of art as a unified sphere and the imaginary realm it permits still nominally purport to articulate a critique to societal alienation needs to be at least revisited.

[75] Marcuse, 'Affirmative Character,' 97.

The ontological question of the institution persists and Bürger's formulation needs to be confronted: why is the institution of art defined as the prevalent definition(s) of art's social function and what is the use of such a definition of the institution of art? A hint could be found in Bürger's suggestion that the 'singular "art as institution"' underlines the prevalence of a single 'concept of art in bourgeois society', while other concepts of art need to be defined against the dominant one.[76] In other words, the aspect of definitional prevalence and its conditions are arguably more crucial than the alleged affirmative function of art's institutionalisation as autonomous specific to bourgeois society. Even if it is granted that art's autonomy in Bürger's terms is the predominant definition of art's social function in bourgeois society, it is doubtful that this predominance suffices in exhausting the concept of the institution in its relation to art.

Benjamin Buchloh's 'specular'[77] paradigm and its relation to institutional power

In his *October* essay 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', Buchloh attempts to historicise the conceptual art of the 1960s (in Europe and the United States of America). Buchloh's thesis is complex and often intertwined with his close examination of individual artists and their work through an underlying micro-periodisation of liminal phases such as 'early'[78] minimal art and 'proto-Conceptual'[79] art. For the purposes of uncovering the *historical parameters* of the institution in art, I will extricate the main currents of his thesis which will in turn yield, albeit laterally, useful registers and art historical articulations on the issue of the institution.

Buchloh understands conceptual art as voiding the traditional aesthetic criteria (taste and connoisseurship) and replacing them with linguistic, legal and institutional ones. He follows closely the different ways in which minimal and

[76] Bürger, 'Institution of "Art",' 10.
[77] Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art,' 134.
[78] Ibid., 116.
[79] Ibid., 111.

conceptual art negated visuality and artistic manual skill while proclaiming linguistic and conceptual aspects. He also observes that many conceptual artists including Robert Morris with his work *Document (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)* accentuate a proposition that was also latent in the first ready-mades: the work of art as 'the ultimate subject of a legal definition and institutional validation'.[80] He thus argues that such art corresponds to an 'aesthetics of administration,' by which defining the aesthetic becomes a 'matter of linguistic convention' and a 'function of both a legal contract and an institutional discourse (discourse of power rather than taste).'[81]

Buchloh argues that this shift takes place gradually, beginning with proto-conceptual art which redefines aesthetic experience as something that now includes 'linguistic' and 'specular' conventions. Linguistic conventions designate the 'institutional determination of the object's status' while specular ones relate to the 'reading competence of the spectator' whose function is explored and emphasised through works such as Morris's *Four Mirrored Cubes* (1965).[82] In this context, the specular is employed to formally denote issues of parity between the art object, the physicality of the space of display and the spectator.[83] In the late 1960s however, Buchloh identifies a tendency which, as I will argue, permits conceptual art (at least the work of Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke) to acquire avant-garde features comparable to those Bürger had attributed to the early-twentieth-century European avant-garde movements. Such conceptual artists reject the specular aspects of the work in what Buchloh calls a 'perceptual withdrawal' which allows for 'a physical and symbolic intervention in the institutional power and property relations

[80] Ibid., 117-19. Buchloh suggests that this quality is 'prefigured' in Duchamp albeit mostly in 'pragmatic' terms. In 1944, Duchamp issued an actual legal 'statement of authenticity' regarding his *L.H.O.O.Q.* readymade (1919), in order to validate the work's authenticity. Buchloh writes: 'What was possibly still a pragmatic maneuver with Duchamp (although certainly one in line with the pleasure he took in contemplating the vanishing basis for the legitimate definition of the work of art in visual competence and manual skill alone) would soon become one of the constituent features of subsequent development in Conceptual Art.' (Ibid., 119)

[81] Ibid., 118.

[82] Ibid., 134.

[83] Ibid.

underlying the supposed neutrality of “mere” devices of presentation.’[84] An example of such practice is the implied equivalence and interchangeability of authorship among the participants of the art group BMPT (Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni). According to Buchloh, by signing each other’s individual work the artists questioned artistic production as the result of unique and individual authorship.[85] Moreover, in the Paris Biennale in 1967, a poster for the art group’s contribution (or ‘manifestation’) featured ‘mug shots’ of the four artists (fig.1).[86] Buchloh understands this as an instance of a mechanically (re)produced ‘aesthetic of anonymity’ as well as an implicit call for audience participation which further challenges the ‘notion of artistic authorship’.[87] In other words, the (real or perceived) possibility for anonymous audience members of producing ‘pictorial signs equivalent to those produced by the artists themselves’ challenges the traditional division and hierarchy between artist and audience and thwarts the traditional status of the artist-author.[88] Such practice becomes a ‘critique that operates at the level of the aesthetic “institution”’ by exposing visual, linguistic and cognitive aspects as ‘always already inscribed within the conventions of language and thereby within institutional power and ideological and economic investment.’[89] In order to perform this critique, conceptual art ‘mimed the operating logic and positivist instrumentality of late capitalism’ and turned ‘the violence of that mimetic relationship back to the ideological apparatus itself.’[90]

Buchloh’s thesis is a complicated one. On the one hand, he attributes to the conceptual art of the late 1960s (in the West) a critical or even radical dimension. Interestingly, this dimension has to do with an administrative aesthetic closely associated with a legalistic and institutional acuteness. It is telling that the art to which Buchloh attributes Bürgerian avant-garde features is the one that exposes institutional power and ideological and economic

[84] Ibid., 136.
[85] Ibid., 139.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 136.
[90] Ibid., 143.

investment. On the other hand, he is quick to notice that 'the critical annihilation of cultural conventions itself immediately acquires the conditions of the spectacle.'[91] He also wonders about the subversive aspect of conceptual art given that the work performed by the artist is administrative and often tedious. He is led to conclude that a key difference between historical avant-garde movements and conceptual art is *the absence of a utopian vision* in the latter: 'from its inception Conceptual Art was distinguished by its acute sense of discursive and institutional limitations, its self-imposed restrictions, its lack of totalizing vision, its critical devotion to the factual conditions of artistic production and reception without aspiring to overcome the mere facticity of these conditions'.[92] In an updated version of Bürgerian pessimism, Buchloh sees an 'irreversible loss' in the workings of conceptual art; in order to subvert the dominant artistic paradigm, conceptual art sacrificed the self-sufficiency of image, skill and memory without realising that this would be fatal to 'traditional aesthetic experience' and the 'traditionally separate sphere of artistic production'.[93] And yet, alongside the irreversible loss of the traditional self-sufficiency of aesthetics, Buchloh refers to the historical moment of conceptual art as an 'Enlightenment-triumph' ('its transformation of audiences and distribution, its abolition of object status and commodity form'), albeit a fleeting instance that would soon be replaced by the previously dominant and now reinvigorated 'specular regime'.[94]

At this point it should be noted that the term specular acquires permutable connotations throughout Buchloh's text. In relation to proto-conceptual art, specular aspects refer to the mirroring of the spectator, which, along with linguistic aspects, feature in works of art challenging preceding canons. In relation to later Conceptual Art which critiques institutional power, specular aspects are associated with the perceptual and visual aspects that make way for linguistic/ administrational/ legalistic ones, while in the context of the

[91] Ibid., 140.
[92] Ibid., 141.
[93] Ibid., 143.
[94] Ibid.

'specular regime' (also in later Conceptual Art) specularity is associated with the 'spectacle' as a broader political, economic and cultural determinant of society. When Buchloh refers to the conditions of the spectacle, he is alluding to the kind of instances pertinent to the practice of BMPT whereby 'the insistence on artistic anonymity and the demolition of authorship produces instant brand names and identifiable products,' or 'the campaign to critique conventions of visuality with textual interventions, billboard signs, anonymous handouts, and pamphlets inevitably ends by following the preestablished mechanisms of advertising and marketing campaigns.'[95]

In a similar pattern to Bürger's defence of the institution's autonomy as a response to the irreversible failure of the avant-garde with the acceptance of its workings as art, Buchloh sees an end to conceptual art's enlightened moment in its submission to the specular regime. However, despite the authors' common frustration and pessimism, it is the major differences between their perspectives that may appear insightful. For Bürger, the irreversible failure of the historical avant-garde to sublate the institution of art into a liberated life praxis both sustains the institution of art as distinct and autonomous from life praxis *and* reunites art and life in the culture industry through a false sublation. For Buchloh, Conceptual Art *succeeded* albeit temporarily *in its intention* to critique and expose institutional power and ideological and economic investment that always lie beneath visual and specular conventions. Relatedly, Buchloh observes that with Conceptual Art a latent aspect of the first readymades surfaces; they are revealed as the ultimate bearers of legal definition and institutional validation – a viewpoint that both clashes with Bürger's overall dismissal of post-avant-garde art and perplexes his clear-cut idea of the workings of the historical avant-garde.[96] Conceptual Art's failure was its obliviousness towards the irreversible and fatal erosion of the separate sphere of artistic production (as well as the traditional

[95] Ibid., 140.

[96] As I further discuss in relation to Hal Foster's viewpoint, the readymade's function was more intricate and multi-faceted than the one Bürger assigns to the workings and intent of the historical avant-garde.

aesthetic sphere). Albeit paradoxically, Buchloh does mourn as a casualty what he sees as the irreversible loss of the last traditionally aesthetic remnants that would preserve the importance of skill, memory and physical substance. Thus, what Conceptual Art tried to do was not to sublate art's autonomous sphere but to unsettle the dominant artistic paradigm or, as Buchloh puts it, 'to emulate the regnant episteme within the paradigmatic frame proper to art itself.'[97] For Buchloh, the purging of the traditionally aesthetic sphere would be fatal, especially given that Conceptual Art's temporary success was overridden by the subsequent prevalence of the specular regime.

Thus, the way Buchloh registers the institutional problem and its divergence from Bürger's approach begin to fully surface. For Buchloh, the institutional determinant is explicitly associated with power and linguistic convention and directly pertains to legalistic, administrational and economic aspects that constitute and condition the specular regime. The ideological apparatus reflects the economic investment regime that governs particular artistic institutions and their relationship to artists, collectors and the public. Furthermore, the aesthetic sphere becomes the ground that allows Conceptual Art to afford its critique of the 'social institutions from which the laws of positivist instrumentality and the logic of administration emanate in the first place,' even if 'these institutions […] determine the conditions of cultural consumption and transform artistic production into a tool of ideological control and cultural legitimation.' [98] The inevitable erosion of such sphere means for Buchloh that such affordance will run out. On the other hand, Bürger discusses the prevalence of definitions of the social function of art – a formulation that could indeed be thought of as involving a kind of regulation upon the production and reception of art and thus, possibly relating indirectly with a discourse of power. However, he is far more preoccupied with the institutionalisation of art as

[97] Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art,' 143.

[98] This comparison between the two authors does not seek to equate art's institutionalisation as autonomous from life praxis with the autonomous sphere of the aesthetic. The two original theories are fundamentally distinct and Bürger was in fact rejecting reception aesthetics (Rezeptionsästhetik). The comparison is rather
drawn on a purely schematic basis and with a view to situate the institutional.

autonomous in bourgeois society through affirmation than with an elaboration on the generative conditions of the definitional prevalence. What potentially attests to this is Bürger's volatile grounding of the production of the dominant definitions; there is little investigation into who creates such definitions and how they circulate or 'enlighten others.' By contrast, in Buchloh, it is first and foremost through *social* institutions that ideological control is transferred to artistic production and leads to cultural legitimation, as though the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere is not de facto already associated in itself with an ideological affirmative mechanism.

Note on the economic/material aspect and its relation to the institution

While, as I have suggested, Bürger does not address the organisational aspect of the institution of art he does address its relation to the economic/material factor. According to him, 'the capitalist conditions to which the work of art is subject in its distribution do not affect the sphere of the social function of works' and therefore 'the commodity-character of works of art does not sufficiently enable us to understand their function'.[99] Bürger refuses to exhaust the complexity of the social function of works of art into their commodity status, even though he admits that this refusal is problematic, insofar as it resorts to the same logic of the autonomous aesthetic sphere which he considers ideological and affirmative.[100] Bürger does not resolve this debate. He seems to suggest that the matter of essence in this case should be located in the material conditions of production rather than the commodity status of a work of art. This position becomes more acute considering art that minimises aesthetic or object-based parameters, evades its commodification through temporality or in broader terms, makes work itself (or even life itself) its primary matter. In such cases, the question of the commodity status becomes redundant, or at least dependent on the conditions of production. The latter can operate as a relatively more solid basis from which the relation of the

[99] Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art",' 16.
[100] Ibid.

material to the institutional can be addressed. Bürger acknowledges a 'connection between the institutional status of art and the material condition of its production in a given society'.[101] This connection is interesting to Bürger as he stresses that it is only with the advent of the institution of art in bourgeois society (i.e. the institutionalisation of art as autonomous and free from the means-end rationality) that the material conditions of artistic production can be conceived as 'alien to art', as opposed to the courtly-feudal period which precedes artistic autonomy and where material conditions of artistic production and the social function of art coincide through patronage.[102] Additionally, Bürger maintains that in courtly-feudal society this relation (of artists and patrons) is an exceptional one (in relation to other kinds of social relations in the courtly-feudal society) as it does not contribute to the reproduction of such society, whereas in bourgeois society, the market 'is far more than something that governs the relation between the producer and the recipient of art; it is the central economic mechanism of bourgeois society'.[103] This connection is to be found in the subjection of art to capital through Marx's concepts of 'formal' and 'real subsumption' as Bürger retrieves them from economist Gerhard Leithäuser:

> formal subsumption largely leaves to the producer of art the disposal over his instruments of work and thus over an essential aspect of its autonomy. Real subsumption under capital transforms the artist into a proletarian employee who follows instructions and has been almost wholly deprived of the requirements for autonomous artistic activity. What is specific in his use-value oriented work is threatened with extinction.[104]

Bürger suggests that formal subsumption pertains to autonomous art while real subsumption would 'put an end to it as an art'. He argues that the institution of art *remains* autonomous in the post-avant-garde condition, and therefore still in the realm of formal subsumption, unlike the culture industry whose

[101] Ibid., 17.
[102] Ibid., 21.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Gerhard Leithäuser, 'Kunstwerk und Warenform,' in *Literatur- und Kunstsoziologie*, ed. Peter Bürger (Cologne: Kohlhammer, 1977), quoted in Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art",' 17.

'production is wholly governed by investment criteria.'[105] The question that in any case arises is to what extent one can still regard art today (or at least part of it) as autonomous in that it is only *formally* subsumed by capital.[106] Furthermore, the variety of operative art institutions and the role of artists therein suggests possibly a mixture of formal and real subsumption. Theorists Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval have referred to the '*subjective* subsumption of labour under capital' that pertains to a particular subjectivation as interiorisation of the unlimited condition of capital to an extent of absolute intimacy.[107] Dardot and Laval argue that this kind of subsumption does not coincide with the 'real' one which is of a lesser remit.[108]

Returning to the issue of material conditions, according to Bürger, 'autonomous art can only refer negatively to the material conditions of its production because it was only in opposition to the sphere of means-end rationality that the autonomy of art constituted itself in the first place'.[109] Based on this assumption, Bürger suggests that

> the artist who produces under conditions where art is viewed as autonomous by the bourgeoisie finds himself impelled to obscure all traces of work in what he creates. That creation must be seen to be a natural product, for it is only on that condition that it can be a counter image to the prevailing principle of means-ends rationality.[110]

Arguably, this assessment is hardly valid in relation to avant-garde art or at least notable streams of post-avant-garde art that not only expose, display or are even identical with the making process but also centrally and visibly implicate the material conditions of production. Examples abound in avant-garde art where making process and work are inseparable; from the Dada cabarets to Surrealist automatic writing techniques, the artists were focally

[105] Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art",' 17.
[106] I return to this question in subsequent sections.
[107] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 187 [emphasis added].
[108] Ibid. In their account, real subsumption signals the extraction of surplus value as increased labour productivity, as opposed to the elongated working day (formal).
[109] Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art",' 21.
[110] Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art",' 22.

upholding rather than concealing the making process. In the post-avant-garde condition – irrespectively of whether such artistic streams are or should be described as 'neo-avant-gardes' – the material conditions of artistic production as well as social reproduction of labour become central concerns and are accentuated and incorporated both formally and thematically in the art. Arte Povera as well as materialist feminist practices, such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles's preoccupation with maintenance in terms of social reproduction, constitute two obvious examples.[111] In this light, there can be two possible conclusions.

Following Bürger's theory of the institution, one conclusion could be that, even in this kind of art, the elements that expose its material conditions of production somehow lose their means-end rationality as they would be absorbed by the affirmative and ideological realm of the institution of art whose sole purpose is to be the means-end-rationality-free realm. Alternatively, one could conclude that such art does actually carry a purpose or in any case leads to the transference of a message that directly addresses and affects real life – to the point that it is inseparable from real life. Accepting the second conclusion would mean that Bürger's theory – at least thusly articulated – is insufficient to fully elucidate ontological questions on the institution of art, possibly because the German theorist is 'blind to the ambitious art of his time', a fallacy of which he has been accused by Foster.[112]

Nonetheless, one of the *contradictions* that troubles Bürger in the part he devotes to the relationship of the institution to the material conditions of production showcases the beginning stage of the multiplicity of ways in which capital forces pervade art (apart from affirmation):

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[111] Arte Povera emerged in Italy in the late 1960s as a precursor to Italian conceptual art. Its insignia was the use of everyday, throwaway materials such as soil, rags and twigs, in order to disrupt commercial art-institutional prescriptions. In 1969, Mierle Laderman Ukeles wrote a manifesto entitled '*Maintenance Art Manifesto* 1969! Proposal for an exhibition "CARE",' thematising the social and gendered conditions of domestic as well as artistic labour and challenging the gendered prescriptions of avant-gardes that glorify destructive creation over maintenance.

[112] Foster, *Return of the Real*, 15.

> A part of the tricky dialectic of autonomy and heteronomy is that art's most radical claim to autonomy, formulated by aestheticism, coincides historically with the submission of the aesthetic to the investment interests of capital. It is precisely the experience of colors, form, and sounds, which is wholly devoid of social content, that is harnessed by advertising and emerging commodity aesthetics. Just as elements of autonomy could be discerned in the dependence of the producer of courtly art, so the total emancipation from any and every social content tends to subject art to the very principle against which its institutional status makes it rebel, and that is the rationality in the utilization of capital.[113]

This could be seen as one phase within a multiple and complex process, through which aspects of art of varying degrees of autonomy (i.e. not necessarily from Aestheticism) will come to fuel the capitalist industry of advertising and commercial aesthetics. However, this 'harnessing' process is gradual, variable in degree and quality, uncertain and in no way as automatic as Bürger presents it. It is within such range that neo-avant-gardes operate and Buchloh's complex position regarding Conceptual Art attests to this.

Institution as subject

In his influential essay 'Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-garde?', Foster attempts a psychoanalytic reading of the avant-garde whereby the institution of art is treated 'as a subject capable of repression and resistance'.[114] In this reading, Foster argues that the avant-garde cannot be discussed in a chronology of origin and repetition since, like a traumatic event, it 'is only registered through another that recodes it' in a type of 'deferred action'. Historical and neo-avant-garde should be understood in a 'complex relation of anticipation and reconstruction' of 'disruptive' and 'restorative' operations. Foster identifies two phases in post-war neo-avant-garde; the first repeats 'hysterically' the trauma of the historical avant-garde while the second works it through 'laboriously'.[115] Buchloh has approximated this view regarding the laborious character of the

[113] Bürger, 'The Institution of "Art",' 22.
[114] Foster, *Return of the Real*, 28.
[115] Ibid., 29.

neo-avant-garde when he refers to Conceptual Art's acute sense of discursive and institutional limitations and its devotion to the factual conditions of artistic production and reception without aspiring to overcome the mere facticity of these conditions. As Foster has succinctly written: 'Bürger and Buchloh also agree on the failure of the avant-garde, but not on its ramifications'.[116] Foster's historical and theoretical reading goes well beyond disappointment due to Conceptual Art's non-utopian nature, the purging of the aesthetic or any type of failure attributed to the avant-garde. Unravelling some of the knots of this reading will laterally inform some of the questions already raised in this chapter regarding the institution.

Foster's thesis is based on a direct critique of Bürger's theory of the avant-garde. Specifically, Foster accuses Bürger of an 'evolutionist' approach that comprises three subsequent stages; the first stage takes place when art's autonomy is 'proclaimed as an ideal in Enlightenment aesthetics', the second one comes with Aestheticism, when art's autonomy becomes art's content in a complete shunning of actual life relevance and the third one is the historical avant-garde's attack to the aestheticist shunning.[117] Foster suggests that the problem with this approach is that it mistakenly treats a purely chronological relation as a causal one presenting 'history as both *punctual and final*'.[118] He holds that Bürger takes the historical avant-garde's rhetoric 'at its own word' and misleadingly presupposes that 'a work of art, a shift in aesthetics, happens all at once, entirely significant in its moment of appearance, and […] once and for all, so that any elaboration can only be a rehearsal'.[119] As a result, through a Bürgerian lens, the historical avant-garde is presented as 'pure origin' and the neo-avant-garde as 'riven repetition' that not only annihilates the former's critique but also inverts it 'into an affirmation of autonomous art'.[120] The historical avant-garde is bestowed with 'pristine authenticity' and expectations

[116] Ibid., 234.
[117] Ibid., 9.
[118] Ibid., 10 [emphasis in original].
[119] Ibid., 10.
[120] Ibid., 10-11.

of ‘magical effectivity’ culminating to a ‘heroic failure’ that deems ‘farcical’ anything subsequent to it.[121] Foster maintains that even though Bürger’s viewpoint is trying to be ‘critical’ it is actually ‘mythical’: ‘It first *constructs* the contemporary as *post*historical, a simulacral world of failed repetitions and pathetic pastiches, and then condemns it as such from a mythical point of critical escape beyond it all’.[122]

Foster’s critique goes even further to question Bürger’s main thesis regarding the institution of art and the avant-garde’s attack on its autonomy with a view to ‘reconnect art and life’.[123] Foster maintains that the opposition between art and life is too simplistic as it does not acknowledge the complexities of neither art nor life, since art is automatically granted (a disputable and otherwise unconfirmed) autonomy while life is conceived ‘not only as remote but also as immediate, as if it were simply *there* to rush in like so much air once the hermetic seal of convention is broken’.[124] Furthermore, according to Foster, in such a simplistic perspective the avant-garde’s failure is by definition inevitable. Foster agrees that the historical avant-garde in a sense critiques the institution of art but to him such a critique does not only amount to pure ‘transgression’, ‘rupture and revolution’.[125] Instead, he suggests that the avant-garde is also ‘*mimetic*’ in its intention to mock, ‘*utopian*’ in its indication of ‘what *cannot* be […] as a critique of what is’, ‘contextual’ and ‘performative’ in that it was always situated within specific socio-political and geographical contexts and set against specific ‘languages, institutions and structures of meaning’.[126] Thus, Foster maintains that artists like Duchamp did not actually try to negate art nor reconcile it with life; their intent was instead a ‘perpetual testing of the conventions of both’.[127] Such a thesis problematises the premises of Bürger’s theory of sublation as applied to the duality of (the institution of) art and life. Understanding the intent of the avant-garde as a more ambiguous and multi-

[121] Ibid., 11-14.
[122] Ibid., 14 [emphasis in original].
[123] Ibid., 15.
[124] Ibid. [emphasis in original].
[125] Ibid., 15.
[126] Ibid., 15-16.
[127] Ibid., 16.

faceted gestural complex than the sublation of the institution of art goes hand in hand with the shakiness or the ambivalence of Bürger's idea of the institution of art as a totality, constructed ideologically as autonomous in relation to real, everyday life.

Ferenc Fehér, another critic of Bürger in the 1980s, has argued against Bürger that art exceeds the institution in its sociological sense. Fehér points out that institutionalisation takes place in society as a form of rationalisation while art is 'exposed to the all-embracing irrationality of our world.'[128] In light of an (albeit reductive) understanding of the institutional as the rational, one begins to wonder whether the concept of the institution can fully do justice to the social function of art in bourgeois society. While Fehér's argument is perhaps too weak to annihilate Bürger's conception of art as institutionalised, it does make Bürger's formulation seem too deterministic. Foster's view of the Bürgerian formulation of the 'art and life' question as too simplistic is plausible. Interestingly, in his recent response to Foster's critique, Bürger does not address Foster's criticism of the simplicity of this duality. How actually or ideologically autonomous is art and how separate from it is life? In relation to the post-avant-garde era, Marcuse's concept of affirmation does resonate today but perhaps in different terms and it is doubtful whether it applies to a fully distinct and separate realm that amounts to the 'institution of art'. A large part of what is dominantly considered art today, (as well as intellect and labour that would definitely fall within art's institutional brackets, such as artistic discourse or non-profit art management and organisation), openly affect actual everyday life and do not pretend to be free from a means-end rationality. Numerous examples could attest to this; from activist and socially engaged art to pedagogical art practice and art in public spaces. Importantly, such examples would not necessarily derive from what Bürger would consider culture industry or pulp literature. Furthermore, even if art's autonomy is granted (at least in terms of ideology) an affirmation, are we right to equate the

[128] Ferenc Fehér, 'What Is Beyond Art?,' *Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology* 5-6, No. 1 (1982): 5, accessed May 14, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1177/072551368200500102.

institution of art in bourgeois society with this autonomy, as if the latter were the single defining aspect? Ultimately, is the equivalence between the propositions that art is 'institutionalised' as autonomous and that it is 'ideologically constructed' as autonomous enough to cover all the definitional aspects of institution?

The disagreement among authors on the work and intent of the avant-garde points to the necessity for closer examination of the various uses of the institution and its definitions. Foster discusses Aleksandr Rodchenko's monochrome paintings in 1921 to argue that the historical avant-garde negated a specific conventionality of artistic media rather than the art institution as such. For Foster, Rodchenko did not bring about the end of painting but simply showed that painting 'could be delimited to primary colours on discrete canvases in his artistic-political context with its specific permissions and pressures'.[129] Foster makes a similar argument regarding the readymade *Fountain* (1917) by suggesting that the readymade reveals the 'conventional limits of art in a particular time and place' while 'the institution of art is not much defined'.[130] Thus, the two artistic gestures (monochromes and readymades) should be seen as performative and declarative, as they indicate 'nothing explicit' about the institution of art.[131] Foster suggests that even though

[129] Foster, *Return of the Real*, 17.
[130] Ibid., 19-20.
[131] Ibid., 19.

convention and institution are related, they are not 'identical'.[132] As he puts it, 'the institution of art may *enframe* aesthetic conventions, but it does not *constitute* them.'[133] Based on this observation, Foster claims that the historical avant-garde dealt with the conventional, through a 'nihilistic' and 'anarchistic' attack to the 'conventions of the traditional mediums', while the neo-avant-garde dealt with the institutional, in a 'creative analysis at once specific and deconstructive'.[134] This is a clear point of divergence with Bürger, especially regarding Foster's belief that it is the neo-avant-garde and not the historical one that first grasps the institution of art as such.[135]

However, there is also a point of convergence between the two authors. Bürger regards the post-avant-garde condition as situated in an era when the avant-garde 'manifestations' have been recognised by the 'art institution […] as milestones in the

Fountain-gate

Foster discusses the *Fountain* as Duchamp's work, despite the ambiguity around the work's authorship. In April 1917, Duchamp wrote to his sister:

'The Independents have opened here with immense success. One of my female friends under a masculine pseudonym, Richard Mutt, sent in a porcelain urinal as a sculpture […]; it was not at all indecent – no reason for refusing it... The committee has decided to refuse to show this thing. I have handed in my resignation and it will be a bit of gossip of some value in New York.'[1]

Authors such as Irene Gammel and John Higgs argue that this friend was the avant-garde Dada artist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and that such readymade fits more her overall practice than Duchamp's.[2]

The ambiguity over the work's author is in line with the artistic mentality and beliefs of Dada artists that toyed with the conventionality of individual authorship. What is important in this chapter is Foster's argument that the *Fountain's rejection* from the Society of Independent Artists reveals more about the institution of art than the work of art itself.[3] The latter should be seen as 'a declaration' and 'a performative' rather than 'an analysis' or 'a deconstruction.'[4]

[1] Francis M. Naumann and Marcel Duchamp, 'Affectueusement, Marcel: Ten Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti,' *Archives of American Art Journal* 22, No. 4 (1982): 8, accessed January 15, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1557298.
[2] Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 224–25.
John Higgs, *Stranger than We Can Imagine: Making Sense of the Twentieth Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2015), 38-40.
[3] Foster, *Return of the Real*, 20
[4] Ibid.

[132] Ibid., 17.
[133] Ibid. [emphasis in original].
[134] Ibid., 20.
[135] Ibid.

development of art in modernity'.[136] Similarly, according to Foster, the first neo-avant-garde in the 1950s turns the historical one into an institution by repeating it hysterically. Foster presents this phase of 'becoming-institutional' of the avant-garde in Freudian terms of 'repetition', which he ultimately thinks of as 'resistance'.[137] However, Bürger has counterargued – regarding all post-avant-garde art – that it was not an 'unconscious compulsion' (and therefore examinable through the lens of a historical psychoanalysis) but rather a '*conscious* resumption within a different context'.[138] Moreover, he has countered a large part of Foster's critique, including the latter's allegation about the former's mythical viewpoint, by somewhat paradoxically arguing that his three-stage evolutionary analysis that culminates with the avant-garde is indeed a historical account from an end point. Bürger claims that even though such account is indeed a 'construction', the 'narrator/historian' of an event knows the event's 'future' and can therefore 'present a contingent sequence of events as a "logical" development'.[139] What Bürger leaves unnoticed is that Foster's post-structuralist reading does *not* actually suggest that the neo-avant-garde artists were themselves acting unconsciously. Rather, Foster's argument suggests that he treats history as a subject through the prism of psychoanalysis in a spirit of critiquing Bürger's mythical-disguised-as-factual historical construction of the historical avant-garde as *origin*. In Foster's account, the relations between historical and neo-avant-garde phases are not posited as punctual and final chronological periods but as complex and fluid relations of repressions, repetitions and resistances.[140]

Regardless of this discrepancy however, the approaches of both authors as well as their clash allow for a navigation into the ontological questions of the

[136] Bürger, 'Attempt to Answer,' 705.
[137] Foster, *Return of the Real*, 21.
[138] Bürger, 'Attempt to Answer,' 710 [emphasis added].
[139] Ibid.
[140] According to Foster, Buchloh's viewpoint of the avant-garde is punctual and final too, insofar as specific moments of the avant-garde are assigned with authenticity (and thereby failure). However, Foster argues that Buchloh's reading diverts from Bürger's, in that the failure of the avant-garde to sublate the institution of art does not automatically signify irrevocable relativism and redundancy of aesthetic means but reveals the 'necessity of analysis' eventually showcased by the neo-avant-garde. See Foster, *Return of the Real*, 234.

institution. What is important at this stage is that Foster refers to a type of institutionalisation of the historical avant-garde and thereby indicates a definitional understanding of institutionalisation as *repetitional canonisation*. However, is repetitional canonisation an exhaustive meaning for institutionalisation? If it is granted that the institution as a category exceeds the norm and the convention, the institution's relation(s) to power requires a closer examination. In constructing their respective arguments regarding art and the avant-garde, Bürger and Foster betray some vagueness around the concepts of institution, institutionalisation, norm and convention, especially in relation to a more contemporary discourse around art and its institution(s) as well as the current socio-political understandings of such institution(s). Foster's account of the late 1990s leaves us with what he perceives as a neo-avant-garde that has moved from 'grand oppositions' to 'subtle displacements.'[141] This might be the case in comparison to the historical avant-garde, but how can we describe the theoretical and art historical landscape taking into account the legacy of Institutional Critique? Before embarking on political conceptualisations of the institution, it is worth examining a widely read essay by the prominent feminist artist Andrea Fraser who has notably engaged with the artistic tradition of Institutional Critique. Published in *Artforum* in 2005, Fraser's 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique' has been insightful in its articulation of some of the most pressing matters of the art institution in the early 21st century.

The relevance of the inside/outside question of the institution

Fraser's essay is published at a time when art institutions (as spaces and even projects) as well as the discourse on them already abound on a global scale to an historically unprecedented extent. At the same time, Institutional Critique has not only been legitimised by art institutions but is *invited* by them. Aware of this context, Fraser advances a few strong but plausible claims. First, in an

[141] Foster, *Return of the Real*, 25.

update of the ‘anything goes’ status of art which placed the emphasis on what could *potentially* be art, she argues that in actual terms art *is* wherever, whenever, whatever and in whomever art is *thought of* as being there: ‘Art is art when it exists for discourses and practices that recognize it as art, value and evaluate it as art, and consume it as art, whether as object, gesture, representation, or only idea.’[142] I would possibly add that art discourses and labour practices are nowadays more powerful than the strict enclosures that confer artistic ontological status, in that they do not even need nor care to validate something as art in order to include it in their own art discourse/practice/labour terms. Indeed, Fraser argues that what is ‘outside’ the institution ‘has no fixed, substantive characteristics’ but ‘is only what, at any given moment, does not exist as an object of artistic discourses and practices’.[143] Furthermore, she asserts that ‘the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves’ and ‘every time we speak of the "institution" as other than "us," we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions.’[144] By ‘us’ she means ‘artists, critics, curators, art historians, dealers, collectors, or museum visitors’.[145] She continues:

> It's not a question of inside or outside, or the number and scale of various organized sites for the production, presentation, and distribution of art. It's not a question of being against the institution: we are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves.[146]

Fraser’s argument aims to reject a commonly held misconception in the discourse of institutional critique according to which artists critiqued art institutions from a supposed outside/uncriticisable position or point of view and

[142] Fraser, ‘From the Critique of Institutions,’ 130.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 133.
[145] Ibid., 130.
[146] Ibid., 133-34.

aimed at destroying the institution of art. Her view of Haacke's legacy is illuminating:

> It may be Haacke, above all, who evokes characterizations of the institutional critic as an heroic challenger, fearlessly speaking truth to power – and justifiably so, as his work has been subject to vandalism, censorship, and parliamentary showdowns. However, anyone familiar with his work should recognize that, far from trying to tear down the museum, Haacke's project has been an attempt to *defend* the institution of art from instrumentalization by political and economic interests.[147]

What does this tell us of the institution of art and its definition? Even though, Fraser's viewpoint is openly influenced by the Bürgerian perspective, there is a distinct divergence from Bürger's line of argumentation – a divergence that moves on a seemingly contradictory pattern. First, Fraser holds that the institution of art today is absolutely 'part of the "real world"' and fully governed by market forces and therefore, the real condition of the art world is the all-pervasive function of the (art) market which no position can realistically claim to evade.[148] Indicatively, she refers to the art market, corporate finance and investment interests, 'neoliberal economic policies', 'nominally "nonprofit" organizations like universities' that 'rely on cheap adjunct labor' and 'museums' that implement 'antiunion policies.' [149] Secondly, echoing her aforementioned view in Haacke's legacy, she still sees a potential for Institutional Critique – an evaluation that sets her against both Buchloh and Bürger:

> If, as Bürger put it, the self-criticism of the historical avantgarde intended 'the abolition of autonomous art' and its integration 'into the praxis of life,' it failed in both its aims and its strategies. However, the very institutionalization that marked this failure became the condition of institutional critique. Recognizing that failure and its consequences, institutional critique turned from the increasingly bad-faith efforts of neo-avant-gardes at dismantling or escaping the institution of art and aimed instead to defend the very institution that the institutionalization of the avant-garde's 'self-criticism' had created the potential for: an institution of critique. And it may be this very institutionalization that allows

[147] Ibid., 132 [emphasis in original].
[148] Ibid., 132-33. The notion of the art world is discussed in the subsequent section.
[149] Ibid., 132-33.

> institutional critique to judge the institution of art against the critical claims of its legitimizing discourses, against its self-representation as a site of resistance and contestation, and against its mythologies of radicality and symbolic revolution.[150]

Despite Fraser's seemingly defeatist articulation that there is no assumable position outside the completely market-ridden and all-encompassing institution of art, she refers to the capacity for self-critique as a *potentiality* inherited from the historical avant-garde. Relatedly, Fraser goes against Buchloh's evaluation that accuses Institutional Critique of the 1960s and 1970s of failing to recognise the fatality of the purging of the aesthetic, sacrificing the last resort of critique towards capitalist logic. She suggests instead that '*recognizing* the partial and ideological character of artistic autonomy, Institutional Critique developed not as a further attack on that autonomy, but rather as a defense of art (and art institutions) against such exploitation [for economic and symbolic profit].'[151] Crucially, the fact that Fraser understands such self-critique as one that permits the *testing* of the institution's proclaimed criticality, resistance, mythologies of radicality and symbolic revolutions indicates a heralded clarity and transparency regarding the institution's condition as different to the affirmative realm of critique towards the means-end rationality of everyday life. Fraser regards the institution of art as, on the one hand, thoroughly implicated in capital forces and, on the other, as preserving the potential for instances of critique that are inextricable from a broader institution of critique. Thus, for Fraser, there is indeed an emancipatory potential, but crucially, it would have to include an emancipation from ourselves, since 'we' are the institution.

Raunig would strongly disagree with such an interpretation of Fraser's account, which he has described as 'an offensive self-historicization.'[152] Raunig casts Fraser's take as defeatist and 'self-obsessed' in that it 'substantializes one's own involvement in the institution and crowds out the

[150] Ibid., 134.
[151] Andrea Fraser, 'What is Institutional Critique?,' in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2006), 306-07. [emphasis added].
[152] Raunig, 'Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming,' 6.

horizon of change from perception.'[153] This all-encompassing quality of the institution of art suggests to Raunig that Fraser understands the institution as a distinct monolith of repressive power that could only be critiqued by outsiders, and since there is no outside to it, there can be no critique.[154] I would contend that Raunig misguidedly interprets Fraser's idea of the pervasiveness of the institution of art as an outright annihilation of any potential for critique. All the aforementioned instances that arguably preserve such potential aside, it seems that Raunig would read in a simplistic, one-dimensional and purely defeatist/self-victimising way Fraser's fundamentally complex, ambiguous and archetypically impenetrable case of practice (*Untitled*, 2003), where she pre-arranges and videotapes her sexual intercourse with a male art collector in exchange for money.[155] Nonetheless, Raunig's response that urges him to articulate the perceived impasse of Institutional Critique as the inevitable outcome of a defeatist self-critique, coincides with the point of departure for his theorisation of institution as the ongoing 'process of instituting'.[156] Raunig rejects what he sees as

> the misconstrual of theoretical approaches from Foucault (the interpretation of his theory of power as a dead-end of a comprehensive *dispositif* of power allowing neither escape nor resistance) and [Pierre] Bourdieu (the hermetic interpretation of his field theory), in ways that reinforce what exists – what is established, arranged, striated and gridded – as the seemingly sole and immutable possible.[157]

He advocates instead for 'the differentiated construction of a non-dialectical way out of purely negating and affirming the institution.'[158] As I discuss further

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[153] Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No. 2,' 174.
[154] Raunig, 'Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming,' 5-6.
[155] For further information, see Andrea Fraser, interview by Praxis (Delia Bajo and Brainard Carey), *The Brooklyn Rail*, October 1, 2004, accessed June 3, 2017, https://brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser.
[156] Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No. 2,' 178.
[157] Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No. 2,' 174. [emphasis in original] Raunig elsewhere refers to Foucault's idea of the 'critical attitude' as both partnering and opposing the 'arts of governing' as well as other 'non-escapist terms of escape' selected out of writings of several authors that advance 'post-structuralist, non-dialectical forms of resistance in refusal of cynical or conservative invocations of inescapability and hopelessness.' See Raunig, 'Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming,' 6.
[158] Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No. 2,' 174

in Chapter 2, Raunig's concept of the instituent attempts to assign itself within such construction.

The art world

Importantly, Fraser refers interchangeably to the institution of art and the art world. The term 'artworld' was coined by the American philosopher Arthur Danto in 1964: 'To see something as art requires something the eyes cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.'[159] It is important to stress that Danto was not using the term to refer to a congregate of art institutions, experts, critics, artists and historians – a use that would approximate Fraser's. He was rather referring to the artworld as an epistemological world that comprises (and permits the conceptual emergence of) art-relevant 'predicates.'[160] Such predicates have the ability to confer artistic ontology and have to do with the '*is of artistic identification*' that essentially pertains to theory(-ies) of art:

> What in the end makes a difference between a Brillo box and a work of art consisting of a Brillo Box is a certain *theory* of art. It is the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is (in a sense of *is* other than that of artistic identification).[161]

Aiming at conceptual analysis through formal logic, Danto's methodology is not so pertinent to a socio-historical account of the conceptual emergence, perseverance or prevalence of the various art-relevant predicates. Nonetheless, Danto does not fail to acknowledge that such emergence is fully embedded within a historical process. Referring to a hypothetical 'abstractionist', Danto writes:

> […] this artist has returned to the physicality of paint through an atmosphere compounded of artistic theories and the history of recent and remote painting, elements of which he is trying to

[159] Arthur Danto, 'The Artworld,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, No. 19, American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Annual Meeting (Oct. 15, 1964): 580, accessed April 12, 2016, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2022937. [emphasis added]
[160] Danto, 'Artworld,' 576.
[161] Ibid., 579-81.

> refine out of his own work; and as a consequence of this his work belongs in this atmosphere and is part of this history.[162]

Relatedly, Danto considers the 'fashion'-based accentuations of specific styles in works of art, for instance a hypothetical trend of 'representational' ones, to be a matter of 'almost purely sociological interest' *outside* the remit of his analysis.[163] While asserting that 'museums, connoisseurs, and others are makeweights in the Artworld,' from his analytical and conceptual point of view all combinations of artistic styles are 'legitimate' insofar as they are art-relevant.[164]

However, is it a mere coincidence that Danto theorised the artworld as soon as Andy Warhol created an artwork as a Brillo box in 1964 and directly problematised the relationship between commodity and the art object? It should be noted that 'Brillo Box (Soap Pads)' is not actually a readymade as Warhol did not use an actual Brillo box but created one out of synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on wood. Danto's theorisation emerges at a time when the readymade has long shaken the ontological grounds of the art object at least in terms of the trivial, the obscene and the everyday object, but apparently it was the Brillo box that did it for Danto as opposed to any other thriving at the time art forms such as Land art or Minimalism that could have been alternative focal points. Danto's theorisation is arguably inscribed within a lineage underscored by various historical parameters responsible for at least the timing of his analytical contribution to art theory. For instance, one of them might be the pervasiveness of consumerism in the 1960s and the ensuing prominence of the shock value that pertains to the fetishisation – or conversely, the critical annihilation – of the commodity through its replication within art. All in all, Danto's seemingly transhistorical and analytical definition of the artworld is more engrained with art history and particularly with the history of art theory than what he is having it to be.

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[162] Ibid., 579.
[163] Ibid., 384.
[164] Ibid.

What could indirectly attest to this is the widespread recontextualisation or extension of Danto's definition of the artworld to centrally include the people involved in art institutions, from connoisseurs and artists to collectors, managers, curators and educators, with regard to their professional conventions and norms as well as their lifestyle. Fraser's use of the artworld begins from this stretched definition, even though her assertion that art is art when it exists for discourses and practices that recognise it as art is quite akin to Danto's view. Fraser refutes perhaps inadvertently Danto's clear-cut distinction between his focus on the artworld as the atmosphere of theories around art-relevant ontological predicates and the sociologically-grounded trends and fashions among such predicates. Or rather, she might be bearing witness to the heightened importance of the latter as the struggle for visibility and the simultaneous depreciation of the former as an analytic and ontological realisation. At a time when it has been long known that anything can be art as long as it is seen as such by an art-relevant discourse, the axis of visibility/invisibility outweighs issues of ontology. Thus, Fraser would be reaffirming the significance of Buchloh's specular regime, while also stressing its pertinence to a socially-determined art-relevant discourse that acknowledges, gatekeeps, authorises, validates, critiques or makes the art, understood as economies and cultures of the visible, the sensible and the knowable.

Transitional remarks / Outro

What begins to become clear is that the institutional question is one of power, discourse, validation and visibility. Alongside conventionality and normalisation or legal and economic frameworks, institutional issues emerge as crucially relevant to issues of subjectivity as well as psychoanalysis. Fraser, Foster and, as I will further discuss, Raunig too, uphold the imbrication of the institution with the self or the subject. Furthermore, Buchloh's denoted conundrum whereby the conditions of the spectacle ultimately prevail over the aesthetic sphere should be examined anew, in a broader sense of an epochal subjectivity that has internalised the conditions of the spectacle. The ethereal

pervasiveness of this internalisation is graphically presented by Deleuze in *Postscript on the Societies of Control*: 'If the most idiotic game shows are so successful, it's because they express the corporate situation with great precision.'[165] Later in the same text, Deleuze writes: 'Can we already grasp the rough outlines of these coming forms, capable of threatening the joys of marketing? Many young people strangely boast of being "motivated"; they re-request apprenticeships and permanent training.'[166] Dardot and Laval's idea on the subjective subsumption of work by capital to the most intimate extremes resonates fully with Deleuze's remarks, which, by pointing towards resistance that has to threaten the *joys* of marketing, affirm the proximity of a psychological urgency. Apart from Foster who draws explicitly on the psychoanalytic schema of deferred action, Bürger and Marcuse's analyses more or less covertly point to themes of the psyche too, evidenced in discussions of an imaginary or utopian sphere where joy and humane values are fulfilled and interpretations of the relation between culture and soul. The question of the psychoanalytic pertinence needs to be further addressed in the context of a rearticulated conception of reality, beyond the shaky distinction of real life praxis and imagination.

The vast divergence of art historical/theoretical readings within the discourse on art and the institution is conducive to a salient obscurity around the institution's ontology. Arguably, unexamined questions and definitional gaps in relation to the function of the process of institution persist, also in terms of the historical period of the contemporary. In addition to these ambiguities, the concept of institution (as process) is typically used in the sense of institutionalisation that denotes crystallisation, establishment, structuring, officialising or other form of closure, that often ignores questions such as who performs or enacts the process of institution (a sovereignty, a subjectivity, singularities or other agency) and which are the various corresponding modalities. Such gaps inform some of the questions addressed in Chapter 2,

[165] Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control,' *October* 59 (Winter, 1992): 4, accessed November 22, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/778828.
[166] Deleuze, 'Societies of Control,' 7.

which seeks to examine whether and how a theory of institution can accommodate more democratic forms – beyond the epistemological and ontological oligopolies or monopolies of alienation and affirmation sustained by market mechanisms in their current form.

2. Instituent Praxis: Elaborations on Power, Subjectivity, Signification and Artificiality

Introduction

This chapter aims at exploring definitions of institution (as the process of instituting) prior to or independently of its association with art. Athena Athanasiou has advocated for a performative politics of the institution that aims at 'instituting *differently*', an articulation that echoes Jacques Derrida's ideas on the active liminality between possibility and impossibility.[1] Athanasiou posits the particularity of the institution 'as an interminably *aporetic* call for another politics that simultaneously performs and resists the institution.'[2] Even though she grounds her argument on a politics of 'being-in-common' situated 'beyond unity and closure' and mobilises the process of institution towards its creative function and a radical futurity, there is little analysis as to what is theoretically and historically irreducible about this process.[3] Athanasiou identifies an 'irreducible ambivalence' in the widespread dependence on and need for 'institutional support for survival and even more-than-survival,' and the simultaneous exposure of 'lives to structural violence, unequal distribution of resources and affects, normalization, and disposability' that perpetuate 'intersecting class, citizenship, racialized, and heteronormative privileges.'[4] However, whether the institution exists in order to offer care and support or to oppress and perpetuate violence and inequality will always seem like an

[1] Athena Athanasiou, 'Performing the Institution "As If It Were Possible",' in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 685. See Jacques Derrida, 'As If It Were Possible, "Within Such Limits",' in *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowldy, 73-99 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
[2] Athanasiou, 'Performing the Institution,' 685.
[3] Ibid., 680.
[4] Ibid., 681.

irreducible ontological ambivalence as long as institution (as process) is not defined in its ontological emergence. In this regard, more useful questions would revolve around whether and how the point of emergence of institution can catalyse shifts of status quo, in terms of multiple power relations contexts such as caring and supportive, oppressive and authoritative or, most commonly, contexts that might be caring but also exclusive or gradually turning into non-caring and oppressive. Such emergence also has to be contextualised in historical terms.

Thus, a key research aim would be to locate and examine theorisations that pay adequate tribute to the modality of the *emergence* of institution and subvert the prevalence of focus on its reproduction/continuation. Raunig and Stefan Nowotny have proposed an understanding of 'monstrosity' as the conceptual umbrella that can at times accommodate the 'non-classifiable disruptions between movement and institution.'[5] However, this formulation already betrays a conceptualisation of institution as different to movement. This is attested by the two authors's use of terms such as 'new institutionality' or 'instituting' to differentiate from institution as something by definition inert: 'If the moment and mode of instituting are in the foreground for this new institutionality, […] it remains no less important to avoid the permanent closure of (in) the institution and to prevent the persistence of the new from coming at the expense of the *capacity* for renewal.' Despite the acuteness of this observation regarding the empirically oft-encountered elimination of the capacity for renewal by the persistence of the new, the authors are terminologically distancing institution from its relationship to the new and a priori cast it as agent of pure inertia. At the same time, they define instituting as an 'event' that both 'breaks with the state apparatus' and 'requires duration, persistence, recurrence' synonymous

[5] Gerald Raunig and Stefan Nowotny, 'Instituent Practices: New Introduction to the Revised Edition 2016,' *transversal texts*, May 2016, accessed June 3, 2017, https://transversal.at/blog/Instituierende-Praxen-Introduction#_ftn1. This excerpt is the translated introduction of Gerald Raunig and Stefan Nowotny, *Instituierende Praxen: Bruchlinien der Institutionskritik* (Vienna, Linz: eipcp, transversal texts, 2016).

to the quality of the 'instituent', or that which institutes. However, which is the precise relation of institution to the new and do we really need the term instituting if it denotes the process of institution? How can a new institution emerge and how can we have – more broadly – new institution? Even though such examination should indeed underline the importance of the predicate of the instituent, the (terminological) disassociation of the latter from institution should arguably be interrogated. Thus, without losing sight of the question of the possibility of more democratic institutional forms, it is arguably urgent to rethink the quality of the instituent in a discussion of thus far underexamined issues pertaining to the *emergence* of institution, its relation to subjectivity, its pertinence to history, its alignment with institutional discourse and its precise association with (any form of) practice.

'What is an Institution?'[6] – what can be gained from an analytic attempt of a definition

In his essay featuring in both an economics journal and an art-related edited volume, John Searle has attempted to produce a typology for the definition of the institution and 'institutional facts' in order to analytically determine the operating mechanisms particular to 'social and institutional reality, including economic reality', differentiating such reality from 'a universe consisting entirely of physical particles in fields of force'.[7] Institutional facts involve the assignment of 'status functions' and are attached to constitutive systems of rules:

> An institution is any collectively accepted system of rules (procedures, practices) that enable us to create institutional facts. These rules typically have the form of *X counts as Y in C* [status function] where an object, person, or state of affairs and lower and lower X is assigned a special status, the Y status, such that the new status enables the person or object to perform functions that it could not perform solely in virtue of its physical structure but requires as a necessary condition the assignment of the status. The creation of institutional fact is, thus, the

[6] Searle, 'What is an Institution?,' 21 (see Introduction, fn. 45).
[7] Ibid., 28-30.

> collective assignment of status function. The typical point of the creation of institutional facts by assigning status function is to create deontic powers.[8]

According to Searle, what he calls 'deontology' as well as language and symbolism are essential to a reality consisting of institutional facts. He understands deontology or deontic powers as particular kinds of 'power relationships' that are permeated by 'rights, duties, obligations, authorizations, permissions, empowerments, requirements, and certifications.'[9] Such relationships include from the institutions of 'government' and 'contractual relationships' to those of friendship or kinship, since all of them are characterised by 'rights, duties and obligations.'[10] Searle considers such power relations to create 'desire-independent reasons for action' in the sense that the realm of deontology precedes desire-based reasons for action associated with such power relationships: 'the possibility of having desires and satisfying them within these institutional structures – for example, the desire to get rich, to become president, to get a Ph.D., to get tenure – all presuppose that there is a recognition of the deontic relationships.'[11] What Searle leaves unexamined and should be key as regards the institutional question is whether the same holds true for the process of the *emergence* of such institutional structures. In other words, is the emergence of institutional structures desire-independent and – more broadly – is it as fact-based or strictly 'deontology'-based as Searle has it? It is doubtful that the emergence of deontology by default precedes desire-dependent reasons for action, or, in other words, that deontology is not produced precisely in order to legitimise desire or other irreducibly psychological motive. Moreover, all these desires that Searle mentions are clearly based on a capitalist universe, or at least one where personal success honours the property-ownership regimes. They are in no way neutral, transhistorical, general. I will endeavour to address some of these tensions in following sections.

[8] Ibid., 50 [emphasis in original].
[9] Ibid., 34.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., 35.

Searle's analysis is certainly valuable in that it emphasises the importance of power relations within the core of institutional structures and in that it points to the centrality of a broad realm of right and collectively accepted systems of rules. He also regards language as the 'fundamental social institution' from which all other institutions are able to arise; language can exist without other institutions such as 'money, property, government, or marriage' but the reverse is, for him, impossible.[12] This is a valuable entry point to the importance of signification, even though, arguably, the predominance of language or signification within the epistemological assemblage of institution is to an extent contestable and will be further nuanced. Searle stresses that the representational function of language or symbolism makes the assignment of status functions possible: 'A status function must be represented as existing in order to exist at all, and language or symbolism of some kind provides the means of representation.'[13] Despite such positivist use of the concept of representation in order to refer to communicatory and linguistic symbolism, Searle 's viewpoint acutely acknowledges language as a fundamental *social* institution. Moreover, he makes a few analytical observations that introduce us into some important intricacies of the concept of the institution.

In Searle's theory, we can observe a distinction between collective and official recognition of status functions, whereby official recognition would derive from an official 'agency' that is itself collectively recognised and can typically issue 'status indicators'.[14] He maintains that collective recognition of status functions is enough to generate deontic powers. Thus, the fact that a person is someone's friend is an 'institutional fact' since it 'carries *collectively recognized* obligations, rights, and responsibilities'.[15] Obviously, there is no official recognition of friendship by any official agency, even though this might be harder to discern or assert nowadays given the nature of contemporary social networking which has created an abundance of personal 'status indicators', to

[12] Ibid., 36.
[13] Ibid., 37.
[14] Ibid., 42.
[15] Ibid., 45 [emphasis in original].

borrow Searle's term, such as acceptances of friend requests or statements of interpersonal favouring through 'likes', albeit social networks hardly bear an official agency that can certify the institutional fact of friendship. It is doubtful whether the friendship status, as indicated by social networks status indicators could be seen as being collectively recognised beyond the algorithmic realm of the social network and one can only speculate about the 'certifying' role and importance of such a realm in the near future.

A relevant distinction is the one that Searle draws between 'formal and informal'[16] institutional structures; 'there is a gradual transition from informal but accepted assignments of status functions, to full blown established institutions with codified constitutive rules, but in both cases the crucial element of deontology is present'.[17] This seems to be a distinction of degree and not quality as he recognises deontology also in informal status functions in friendship and even in promises. Interestingly, Searle registers the distinction between collective versus official recognition through an institution that one would expect – at least from a western perspective – to be full-blown, well-established and officially recognised and certified, i.e. housing property. Searle stresses that in certain countries, such as Egypt, there is often no status indicator for property and therefore no official recognition.[18] Property then can neither be taxed nor be used as capital, even though, in the Egyptian society, it is collectively recognised as property belonging to owners (whom Searle describes as 'squatters, in the sense that they do not legally own the property') and continues to 'generate deontic powers.'[19] In short, Searle suggests that undocumented and officially unrecognised property in Egypt lacks 'full deontic powers' since some of them would be impeded by the lack of official evidence that would certify the property.[20]

[16] Ibid., 34.
[17] Ibid., 33.
[18] Ibid., 41-42.
[19] Ibid., 42.
[20] Ibid.

Another important distinction that Searle makes is the one between 'constitutive' and 'regulative' rules. Institutional facts and institutions derive from constitutive rules – those that constitute the very institution – and not simply regulative ones.[21] In this sense, the rules of chess are constitutive of the chess as without them there can be no chess, while the rules of driving are regulative since driving can exist without them.[22] This leads us to a very important conclusion. Institutions can be constituted by rules, without necessarily being attached to existing law or official regulations. Rather, they simply require collective recognition of assigned status functions.

Would Searle regard art as an institution? The answer to this question can only be approximated since Searle regards 'science, religion or education' as 'massive forms of human practices' that 'do not *as such* carry a deontology.'[23] In a close reading of his account, we could answer the question both affirmatively and negatively; affirmatively, if we decide to use the word institution to designate massive forms of practices such as science or religion which include a plurality of sub-institutions and negatively, if we decide not to. Art is too broad (it extends from any type of visual and aural culture to actual life, knowledge and concepts, discourse, activism, direction, organisation of action) and too diverse in its deontology. Art's deontic powers would be too indeterminate to be exhaustible in one institution constituted by constitutive rules that determine its status functions. Even if, per Bürger, we accept art's autonomy (from the market logic) as its constitutive rule and deontology in bourgeois society, a *collective acceptance* of this condition remains doubtful – at least in the current form of late capitalist society. Equally, even though Foster and Buchloh's respective accounts point towards issues of power and language, conventionality and canonisation, it is impossible to consider these accounts as producing (a) unanimous deontology(-ies) around the category of art. This much is clear: art is definitely not *one* institution. Affirmation does not apply univocally to all art nor to the institution of art. Art's autonomy involves

[21] Ibid., 32.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 46.

more complexity than its idea of an institutionalised affirmative sphere. How then does art pertain to institutions? Even though it accentuates the crucial aspect of deontology, Searle's positivist understanding of the institution merely hints at the political ontology that needs to be examined if conclusions that take into account art's peculiarities are to be drawn.

'Instituent praxis' and 'instituent practices': The context

For the purposes of this research, the most recent and timely theoretical reconfiguration that centrally employs and/or develops the notion of the institution in a sustained and thorough social and political theory can be found in the co-authored work of Dardot and Laval. Another earlier configuration is traceable in the work of Raunig. Even though the latter's work has featured prominently in art-institutional/curatorial discourse, the French duo's thought that should arguably become focal, as it offers a more theoretically coherent and insightful political understanding of the institutional. Dardot and Laval introduce the concept of 'praxis instituante', which has been translated in English as 'instituent praxis', while Raunig uses the concept of 'instituting' (as process) or 'instituent practice,' as corresponding to 'instituent practices.'[24] Raunig's 'practice' refers (interchangeably) to instituting as process and 'practices' to specific instances of instituting. It is in the theorisation of instituting as 'self-instituting' where Raunig grounds his political argument.[25] On the other hand, Dardot and Laval elaborate on the notion of praxis and its theoretical implications in such a way that their idea of the instituent can only be articulated together with their notion of praxis.

Before my analysis of the two closely related but ultimately distinct theoretical articulations, it is necessary to address their respective theoretical backgrounds and contexts which bear both differences and similarities.

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[24] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 392.
Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No 2,' 180.
[25] Gerald Raunig, 'Flatness Rules: Instituent Practices and Institutions of the Common in a Flat World,' in *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World*, ed. Pascal Gielen (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2013), 176.

Importantly, both approaches relate to the political idea of 'the common' – increasingly present in political articulations that challenge the 'normality' of capitalism but so far underrepresented in art theory, including that addressing the art institution. Both articulations draw on autonomist Marxism; Dardot and Laval critique Hardt and Negri while Raunig is more accommodating to the concept of constituent power. Raunig's methodology and terminology are also heavily influenced by post-structuralist thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze and Guattari. His writing is thus more poetic and metaphorical than Dardot and Laval's, who also draw on Guattari's work on institutional psychoanalysis. Despite Dardot and Laval's proposition that the political principle of the common has to be instituted, they do not use the concept of instituent praxis as merely a methodological tool subservient to the desired implementation of the common; rather, they spend a significant part of their analysis in *Common: on Revolution in the 21st Century* to originally define and elaborate on it as a concept in itself. It is worth noting that the present thesis progresses in reverse in that it revisits the concept of institution and its possible expanded function in contemporary social realities, such as the art world, while maintaining the hypothesis of the desire for the common as political background and positionality.

'Instituent praxis' and 'instituent practices': The 'constituent'

Raunig attempts a critique of power through valorising self-organisation and advocating for a politics of autonomy. He denounces what he sees as the defeatism of later Institutional Critique (mainly in Fraser's writings) by contending that what he calls instituent practices neither daydream of power-free spaces nor retreat into defeatist self-critique. This caveat forms a lucid and necessary framework that could recontextualise the institution away from stagnancy and dead-end duality:

> What is at stake is specifically not the institution as an unchanging structure and state apparatus, as a mere element of a dominant repressive system. If, instead, institutions are

> grasped as processes, then the problem goes beyond the terrain of the critique of the state and capitalism, for social movements and revolutionary machines cannot dispense with institutions, nor are they immune to the occurrence of structuralization, rigidification and institutionalization.[26]

In other words, for Raunig, on the one hand, instituting involves an insurrectional act or, more broadly, a break from a given dominant institutional regime and postulates a new institutional arrangement. On the other hand, instituting acknowledges the possibility for structuralisation/rigidification and constantly strives against it. Once the emphasis is placed on the process rather than the institution, it becomes clear that instituting occurs also in practices which are not traditionally defined as institutions. Set on the tension between artistic intervention and activism, *Park Fiction* is an example that Raunig refers to. He describes it as a semi-fictional park initiated in the early 1990s in Hamburg by some local social groups, initially to prevent an urban development plan. With reference to Park Fiction Raunig writes:

> […] a stronger participation in instituting can be recognized in the pluralization of the instituting event: especially the concatenation of so many ongoing and diversely composed instituting events hinders an authoritarian mode of instituting and simultaneously counters the closure of/in the institution Park Fiction. The various arrangements of self-organization promote broad participation in instituting, because they newly compose themselves as a constituent power again and again, always tying into new local and global struggles.[27]

Raunig does not fail to observe that artistic practice and instituting processes are equally enmeshed in mechanisms of *power*. However, what specifically makes such processes instituent remains to an extent random, or at least directly dependent on the specificity of practices and whether they combine a dissident rejection of a *status quo* of power relations with a self-organised alternative, whereby 'desire' is collectively produced and learnt.[28] Raunig's latent but promising tracing of the Guattarian link between the instituent and

[26] Raunig, 'Instituent Practices, No 2,' 174.
[27] Ibid., 184-85.
[28] Ibid., 185.

the production of desire – a link that I discuss further in subsequent sections – fails to tie into a conceptualisation of a collective subjectivity at the heart of the instituent. Arguably, Raunig makes the ungrounded assumption that the plurality – or diversity – of desire in the instituting events comprising the main instituting event will automatically hinder an authoritarian mode of instituting, as if authoritarianism only arises in homogenous social schemata with a common desire and devoid of difference or otherness. The main problem, however, is that he does not account for a conceptually necessary or valid link that ties the plurality and diversity of a practice to its autonomy and self-determination – other than his resort to the constituent. Relatedly, his idea that a continuous self-composition and reconfiguration of a practice as constituent power would promote broad participation in instituting amounts to suggesting that self-organised struggles that continuously relate to other such struggles prevent their practice from turning into a constitution. Before proceeding with the definition of the instituent, what it means for a practice *not* to turn into a constitution and remain in the realm of constituent power needs to be addressed.

Hardt and Negri have attempted to rethink constituent power away from its traditional philosophical conception as the constituent assembly that confers power to a constitution as sovereign power, in the context of major republic-forming revolutions such as the American and the French.[29] They have suggested that the constituent should be understood in absolute terms, as preceding and exceeding constituted power (constitution) and therefore as able not to become a sovereign power, insofar as power is not conferred.[30] I return to this point through its critique by Dardot and Laval. What is of immediate interest is the way this proposition ties in with institutions and the institutional process. Hardt and Negri regard institutions as composed and 'continually transformed' by 'singularities', instead of 'individuals' or 'identities'.[31] Singularities are conceived by Hardt and Negri as 'always already

[29] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 9-10.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 357-58.

multiple' and 'constantly engaged in a process of transformation.'[32] Singularities pertain to the institutional process by being dissonant towards 'the ruling power' and often by being 'in conflict with one another.'[33] Thus, Hardt and Negri consider conflict to be the basis of institutions and they regard the latter as 'open-ended in that they are continually transformed by the singularities that compose them.'[34] At the same time, the authors think of the consolidation of 'collective habits, practices and capacities that designate a form of life' as a key attribute of institutions.[35] Evidently, the authors are trying to attach the institutional process to the *sustaining* of rupture, the consolidation of new forms of life together with the permanent caveat of open-endedness of the constant transformation of the participating singularities. In this rhetoric, however, the defining capacities of the institution ultimately appear to be consolidation and perpetuation, rather than transformation. For, in close analysis, it is the singularities or even constituent power instead of the institutional process that primarily carry the dissonant, revolting or transformative aspects. In fact, Hardt and Negri argue that it is due to the institutional process that singularities 'achieve some *consistency* in their interactions and behaviors, creating in this way a form of life,' even if these are not 'fixed in identity.'[36] Furthermore, in trying to elucidate how institutions form a constituent power Hardt and Negri write:

> Institutional norms and obligations are established in regular interactions but are continually open to a process of evolution. The singularities that compose the multitude do not transfer their rights or powers, and thus they prohibit the formation of a sovereign power, but in their mutual encounters each becomes more powerful. The institutional process therefore provides a mechanism of protection (but with no guarantees) against the two primary dangers facing the multitude: externally, the repression of the ruling power, and internally, the destructive conflicts among singularities within the multitude.[37]

[32] Ibid., 358.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 357.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 358 [emphasis added].
[37] Ibid., 359.

Arguably, even though the authors define institutions as based on social conflict and the institutional process as involving a caveat of self-rupture, it never becomes quite clear how these exceed the function of constituent power, other than occasionally simply serving it in their capacity to provide the continuity aspects (for instance, in establishing norms and obligations). Such capacity, however, would be no different to the most traditional definitions of institution that examine it as mere reproduction of pre-existing structures. It seems that for Hardt and Negri institutions are conceptually there in order to constantly reflect the need for singularities to transform – a relation that casts the definition of the institution as *fully representational* despite the authors' broader anti-representational advocations. Even though Hardt and Negri contribute to a valid definition of institution by relating it to insurrection and directly entangling it with social conflict and revolutionary success, they still prioritise 'constituent governance' in 'juridical, constitutional and governmental' terms, in their recognition that the 'revolution must be governed' and cannot be fully spontaneous.[38] At the same time, it is nowhere made clear how the institutional process itself breaks from the reproduction or consolidation of norms and collective habits, apart from instances that are ultimately attributed to the function of singularities or constituent power.

Regarding the relation between the instituent and the constituent, in their introduction to a revised edition on instituent practices (2016), Raunig and Nowotny argue against the prioritisation of the question of 'constituent processes' over that of instituting and suggest that 'instituent practice and constituent power mutually presuppose one another.'[39] For instance, they write:

> Constituent power here combines with the practices of all the solidarity initiatives and networks which, in the midst of government restrictions, racist policies, and deepening social fault lines, have not allowed themselves to become misled about the fact that no shared future is available without instituting new

[38] Ibid., 371.
[39] Raunig and Nowotny, 'Instituent Practices: New Introduction.'

> forms of social interaction – and that no future will ever be available at all if not as a shared future.[40]

Are the authors ultimately associating the constituent with power and the instituent with practice(s)? Can there be instituent power? Even though Raunig theorises an instituent *process*, he does not elaborate on instituent *power*. The instituent seems to pertain to a practice that would institute new forms of social interaction, while it would be guided and permeated by constituent power. This is somewhat inconsistent to Raunig and Nowotny's assertion that both the constituent and the instituent should pertain not only to the purely juridico-political realm but also to the social.[41] Thus, even though they suggest that the question of instituting should not be treated as secondary to the one concerning constituent processes, the instituting process instigates forms of social interaction that (hopelessly) seek not to rigidify, while all the (micro-)political issues are left to the constituent. Meanwhile, very little is said about what constitutes the institution of new forms of social interaction. As I shall further discuss, Raunig's idea of the instituting process as embodying a resistance to structuralisation through pluralising might be the instance that mostly approximates Dardot and Laval's understanding of the instituent. However, Raunig's insistence on a central – albeit ambivalent and frail – association between the notion of the instituent and the concept of constituent power (as articulated by Hardt and Negri) prevents him from fully articulating the particularities of the concept of the instituent.

Dardot and Laval's critique of Hardt and Negri

Dardot and Laval consider Hardt and Negri's conceptual endeavour of a non-sovereign constituent to be problematic due to the dubiousness of its claimed condition of subjectivity as 'constituent process' and 'constituent decisions' directly attributed to social movements.[42] The French authors maintain that Hardt and Negri's concept of constituent power loses its distinctness as it is

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration* (New York: Argo, 2012), 51-56, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 395.

inextricably embedded in social struggles, defined by Hardt and Negri as constituent.[43] Dardot and Laval consider such struggles fundamentally diverse to the extent that it is misleading to homogenously attach a theoretical concept such as the constituent to them.[44] Furthermore, the two authors accurately critique Hardt and Negri for failing to describe how the constituent would lead to the transformation of new forms of life into collective habits.[45] This is a critique that could be applied to Raunig who also fails to elucidate the relation between the constituent and the instituent as concepts, apart (presumably) from implying that the former is about power and the latter about practice, which is, arguably, a theoretically unsustained differentiation. Dardot and Laval go as far as suggesting that the concept of the constituent could be altogether abandoned, considering that it derives from a philosophical tradition which has theorised 'revolutions that mainly aimed at producing new political constitutions'.[46] In any case, they suggest that any distinction between the constituent and the instituent should not perpetuate the misconception that the former is solely a political concept while the latter a sociological one.[47]

Dardot and Laval's initial remarks on the instituent

Dardot and Laval argue that the production of a common law or a law of the common ('droit du commun') cannot be conceived 'only in terms of customary law ('droit coutumier')'.[48] The two authors maintain that even though custom can produce law, 'such production is fundamentally determined by the unconscious transmission of ancient rules.'[49] Therefore, according to these authors, it is incapable of instituting the 'unappropriable' as what *should* not be appropriated, as doing so would require a *conscious* instituent act.[50] Dardot and Laval's broader political aim is to conceive and theorise the 'creation of

[43] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 381.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 369.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

new rights of use that will limit private property, through the recognition of inappropriability as social norm.'[51] Even though I will not discuss the potential function of new use rights that would limit property, I will examine the general conceptual pattern on which Dardot and Laval ground such function. According to them, seeking to directly establish new customs as ways of acting and doing would be somewhat absurd since customs cannot be 'decreed'.[52] The authors aim instead to define the type of practice that would lead to the '*invention of rules of law* that are likely to become customs in the long-term.'[53] Thus, the authors endeavour to discuss the collective practice through which people can produce ('peuvent produire') rules of law, independently of the existing ones and – if necessary – against them.[54]

The key starting point for Dardot and Laval is to definitionally uphold 'institution as an *act* of instituting' ('l'institution en tant qu' acte d' instituer').[55] It should be noted at this point that in French, unlike English, the meaning of institution as the act of instituting is more prominent comparing to its definition as singular establishment, since the word establishment (etablissement) is used more extensively for such singular institutions. Nonetheless, Dardot and Laval point out that (even in French) as soon as the linguistic passage from verb to noun (from 'to institute' to 'institution') is made, what is predominantly retained is the *result* of the act rather than the act itself: 'what is thus signified is the system of rules that govern a collectivity rather than the act of legislating, the social grouping whose cohesion is secured from a constraining power rather than the act of transmitting or conferring such power'.[56] The authors acutely observe that such reduction cannot sufficiently be addressed through the more processual concept denoted by the noun 'institutionalisation' as the latter mainly indicates the officialisation of what already exists by endowing an implicit rule with the 'fixity' of the explicit.[57] As Dardot and Laval note,

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid. [emphasis added].
[54] Ibid., 369-70.
[55] Ibid., 370 [emphasis added].
[56] Ibid., 370.
[57] Ibid.

institutionalisation stipulates an 'ex post facto' recognition rather than a creative activity that would produce something anew.[58] The two authors seek however to go beyond this preliminary terminological analysis, which, as they argue, merely situates the problematics of the relation between an act and its result into the 'nature of the act itself, regardless of whether the act is understood as the officialisation of the already existing or the production of the entirely new.'[59] Thus, with a view to examining such problematics, the authors turn to the concept of creation in terms of the imaginary, as defined by Castoriadis.

The imaginary and the social-historical

Before elaborating on their thesis on creation and the social-historical, Dardot and Laval present critically the 'sociological reduction of institution to the instituted'[60] summarisable in Paul Fauconnet and Marcel Mauss's approach, according to which, historical shifts 'from everyday fashion variations to political or ethical revolutions are always, and in variable degrees, modifications of existing institutions.'[61] Dardot and Laval reject such an approach by firmly advancing that 'history is the element of the radically new'.[62] The authors examine this thesis largely through Castoriadis's theory, which they see as overcoming the traditional reduction of the institution to the instituted and asserting the 'primacy of the instituent over the instituted' in the formulation that 'the instituted is always the result of instituent power as power of creation.'[63] For Castoriadis, 'creation, just as much as alienation, presupposes the capacity to grant oneself what is not (what is not given in perception, or what is not given in the *symbolic* links of previously constituted rational thought).'[64] Dardot and Laval draw from Castoriadis's distinction

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 372.
[61] Paul Fauconnet and Marcel Mauss, 'La Sociologie, Objet et Méthode,' in *Essais de Sociologie*, ed. Marcel Mauss (Paris: Le Seuil, 1971), 17, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 382.
[62] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 382.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Castoriadis, *Imaginary Institution of Society*, 133 [emphasis added].

between the imaginary, as the capacity to represent something circumstantially absent yet generally existing within perception (‘reproductive imaginary’), and the ‘radical imaginary’ as the capacity to make be what has not yet been – a relation or a thing that has not previously existed in perception or otherwise.[65] Castoriadis argues that the radical imaginary is '*before* the distinction between "real" and "fictitious"'; 'it is because radical imagination exists that "reality" exists *for us* – exists *tout court* and exists *as* it exists.'[66] Thus, Castoriadis foreshadows the pertinence of the real/artificial which I discuss later in a Guattarian framework. All in all, Dardot and Laval argue that ‘the institution should not be regarded primarily as the instituted but as the instituent that gives rise to the instituted which will in turn be subverted by the radically new.’[67] The ‘instituent moment’ is revealing of a ‘specific human capacity that consists in creating from nothing an entirely original signification’ pertaining to what Castoriadis calls the ‘imaginary’: ‘representation not as image of [something] but as radically new form.’[68]

Dardot and Laval refer to the two dimensions found in Castoriadis’s imaginary, the instituted and instituent, the former designating already established ‘significations and institutions’ and the latter ‘the very source from which new significations and institutions emerge in the course of history.’[69] Castoriadis considers the ‘social-historical’ as essentially including the ‘non-causal’ which, in turn,

> appears as behaviour that is not merely 'unpredictable' but creative (on the level of individuals, groups, classes or entire societies). It appears not as a simple deviation in relation to an existing type but as the positing of a new type of behaviour, as the institution of a new social rule, as the invention of a new object or a new form – in short, as an emergence or a production

[65] Castoriadis, ‘Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary,’ 321, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 382-83.
[66] Castoriadis, ‘Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary,’ 321 [emphasis in original]. Here, Castoriadis uses the term ‘imagination,’ which he associates with the individual psyche, as distinct from the ‘imaginary,’ which has both a social and an individual moment (imagination). This distinction has implications on which I elaborate in subsequent sections.
[67] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 382.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

> which cannot be deduced on the basis of a previous situation, as a conclusion that goes beyond the premises or as the positing of new premises.[70]

The instituent is thus theorised as the social or historical creation of signification/meaning that is made possible through the radical imaginary which, unlike what traditional sociological approaches had it, does not designate a modification of the already instituted but a *truly new* creation *from* nothing (ex nihilo) – yet 'not *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo*'.[71] Following Castoriadis, Dardot and Laval regard such creation as *conditioned* by determined and already given aspects and situated in particular given contexts, without being *caused* or determined by them. In fact, Dardot and Laval go further than Castoriadis in arguing that there is no strictly-speaking 'ex nihilo' creation as it would amount to the archetypal theological one.[72] Rather, they advocate that all creation comes from something or arises from given conditions ('ex aliquo') which however do not *cause* the creation ('sine causa').[73] A caused creation would be an oxymoron and an unconditioned creation would be impossible. In this respect, Dardot and Laval consider 'cum' (with) as more appropriate to 'ex' in describing the relation of the creative act to its conditions.[74] In short, creation is always conditioned by given or preexisting conditions but is not determined by them in a necessary cause-effect relation.

The two most important insights that Dardot and Laval's theorisation of Castoriadis's workings of creation as the field proper to the social-historical operating through the instituent or radical imaginary are, firstly, that the instituent is essentially about signification or creation of meaning and secondly, that such signification is irreducibly non-causal *and* conditioned by determined preexisting conditions. There are still however numerous questions to be addressed, such as whether or not this is a conscious creation – which would

[70] Castoriadis, *Imaginary Institution of Society*, 44 [emphasis in original].
[71] Castoriadis, 'Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary,' 333 [emphasis in original].
[72] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 389.
[73] Ibid., 390.
[74] Ibid.

also lead to the question of power – and whether or how subjectivity relates to it.

The binary of constituent and instituent power and subjectivity

Dardot and Laval draw from Castoriadis's distinction between 'explicit' and 'implicit power'.[75] Explicit power is judicial and governmental power understood broadly as pertinent to any instance in society that involves 'the instances or authorities capable, explicitly and effectively, of issuing sanctionable injunctions.' [76] Such instances or authorities pertain to 'jurisdictions (dikê) and decisions (telos)' and have always been present in all forms of society and exercised by social entities such as tribes and warriors to the people and the state.[77] Importantly, Dardot and Laval regard constituent power as a form of explicit power and suggest that it has been largely granted priority within philosophical traditions that have dealt with political questions around constitution and its relation to revolution, the State and sovereignty.[78] The authors trace the downgrading of the instituent in such traditions with an emphasis on Jean-Paul Sartre, who allegedly condemns the instituent by attaching it to the birth of sovereignty in the realm of the social, and Hardt and Negri who, as I have already discussed, prioritise the constituent over the instituent – albeit exhausting the former in social struggles and thereby stripping it of its theoretical meaning.[79] Dardot and Laval also unsettle the

[75] Ibid., 384.
[76] Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments: Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 85. Castoriadis writes: 'This explicit power, the one we speak of in general when we speak of power, which concerns the political sphere, in its essence rests not on coercion – there obviously always is coercion to some extent or other and, as we know, it can reach monstrous heights– but rather on the internalization, by socially fabricated individuals, of the significations instituted by the society under consideration.'
[77] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 384. Castoriadis considers explicit power to fall in the realm of 'the political' ('*le politique*') in its distinction to politics ('*la politique*') that he associates with 'instituting power'. See Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, 84-87. More on this, in subsequent sections.
[78] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 384.
[79] Ibid., 377, 384. The authors suggest that Sartre's theorisation of the instituent moment as the shift from sovereignty to authority and as collective decay and inertia is linked to his project of presenting state power and government as the ultimate function of the institution. Instead, Dardot and Laval seek to theorise the emergence of the institution prior to the moments of collective degradation,

concept of ‘self-determination’ (‘autoposition’) when it is presented as cut off from the already instituted social realm; self-determination promotes then the problematic ‘mythological figure of a […] legislator’ who ‘institutes a people’ by endowing it with an ‘appropriated constitution,’ as well as the a-historical myth of the collective act of determining one’s own constitutional rules in a supposed moment of pure origin or as a collective agency that creates itself ‘ex nihilo’.[80] Instead, through Castoriadis’s thinking, the two authors assert the primacy of instituent power over constituent and legislative power: ‘the true creative power is not legislative power […] nor constituent power […] but the power to institute imaginary significations […]’.[81] Castoriadis writes:

> Before any explicit power and, even more, before any "domination," the institution of society wields over the individuals it produces a *radical ground-power*. This ground-power, or primordial power, as manifestation of the instituting power of the radical imaginary, is not locatable. It is never the power of an individual or of a nameable instance. It is carried out by the instituted society, but in the background stands the instituting society […].[82]

Dardot and Laval concur with Castoriadis’s definition of instituent power as ground-power (‘infrapouvoir’) in the sense that it pertains to the instituent imaginary as creation of social significations and cannot – unlike a constitution – be monopolised by any particular location or form.[83] Dardot and Laval maintain that the instituent is fundamentally historical as the power of the social-historical field and always arises from the already instituted; instituent power pertains to ‘the historical thickness of an already instituted society as *the condition* that allows citizens to assemble and decide on functional rules of political institutions’.[84] As the power of the social-historical realm itself, instituent power has no ‘subjects-authors’ (‘sujets-auteurs’) and derives from

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petrification and inertia and as other than the institution of sovereignty or authority. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: NLB, 1976): 583, 599-608, 628.

[80] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 384-85.

[81] Ibid., 385.

[82] Castoriadis, ‘Power, Politics, Autonomy,’ 150 (See Introduction, fn. 52) [emphasis in original].

[83] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 384.

[84] Ibid., 385 [emphasis added].

an ‘anonymous collective’ (‘collectif anonyme’).[85] Equally, for Castoriadis, *everyone* could be an ‘author’ of instituent power: ‘to the degree that this power can be participated in, it is participated in by all. Everybody is, potentially, a coauthor of the evolution of language, of the family, of customs, and so on.’[86] Importantly, Castoriadis stresses that ‘language, family, mores, "ideas," "art," a host of social activities as well as their evolution are beyond the scope of legislation in their essential part.’[87] Dardot and Laval affirm that, in Castoriadis’s thought, neither legislative power nor constituent power are properly creative: the former as merely a ‘constituted power’ and the latter as endowing ‘legislative and executive power with their respective place in the constitution’ fall short of the creative power of instituting imaginary significations.[88] Therefore, instituent power is seen as distinct from constituent power in that, as social-historical creation of an anonymous collective, instituent power is outside – or ‘below’ (‘en deçà’) – of all will and consciousness.[89] Radical instituting ground-power is essentially conceived by Castoriadis as unconscious, since such is the modality of the radical imaginary. This is an important caveat given that, as we will see, Dardot and Laval postulate their concept of instituent praxis as a ‘co-institution of rules’.[90]

However, Dardot and Laval will develop their conception of instituent praxis based on a number of issues and critiques that they raise on this specific thread of Castoriadis’s thinking. They question the rationale that since instituent power cannot be attributed to one or multiple subjects-authors and since ‘the social-historical immensely transcends any "intersubjectivity"’, there should be an automatic attribution to an anonymous collective.[91] They argue that the formulation that instituent power does not bear any subject in particular should not necessarily amount to the assumption that it is the power of ‘*outis*,

[85] Ibid., 385.
[86] Castoriadis, ‘Power, Politics, Autonomy,’ 168. As I will further discuss, Dardot and Laval critique the mode of participation in instituent power according to Castoriadis.
[87] Castoriadis, ‘Power, Politics, Autonomy,’ 168.
[88] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 385.
[89] Ibid., 395.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Castoriadis, ‘Power, Politics, Autonomy,’ 144, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 385.

of Nobody.'[92] They observe that Castoriadis does not elucidate the participation of individuals in instituent power, even though he has theorised the individual psyche as directly associated with radical or unconscious *imagination*, which differs from the radical *imaginary*.[93] For Dardot and Laval, individual psyche as conceived by Castoriadis remains fundamentally a-social.[94] Their rationale is that the two instances of the radical *imaginary*, i.e. radical *imagination* (individual psyche) and the *social* imaginary (social-historical realm), are not only irreducibly heterogenous but the individual is seen as simply internalising social significations.[95] As Dardot and Laval point out, since Castoriadis regards radical imagination and the social imaginary as fundamentally heterogenous and the individual as simply internalising social significations, it becomes difficult to conceive the exercise of instituent power on behalf of the individual beyond the perpetuation of customs or rather beyond the reduction of 'the appearance of new customs to an imperceptible modification of old ones'.[96] All in all, they suggest that Castoriadis's ground-power is participatory to such an extent that prevents or voids participation and 'its workings tend to be taken for the unconscious transmission/modification of traditions and customs.'[97] Therefore, even though – like Castoriadis – Dardot and Laval regard instituent power as the 'collective work of everyone' ('l' oeuvre collective de tous'), they advocate that the instituent does not by definition entail the absence of subjectivity nor need remain at the level of the unconscious. Indeed, they seek to reconcile institution as the (unconscious) creation of new significations with an 'activity *conscious* of itself, not as a whole but as part of a whole'.[98] For this reason they depart from instituent power in order to address the concept of instituent praxis.

[92] Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy,' 150, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 385.
[93] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 385.
[94] Ibid., 386.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 396.
[98] Ibid., 390 [emphasis added].

Conscious self-institution and praxis

Castoriadis distinguishes between politics (‘la politique’) and the political (‘le politique’) associating the former with implicit or instituent power and the latter with explicit power. For Castoriadis, even though politics essentially derives from instituent power as ground-power, it amounts to the *making-explicit* of such power, not as constituent/explicit power but as the conscious and deliberate collective activity of the institution of society:

> Politics, such as it was created by the Greeks, amounts to the explicit putting into question of the established institution of society. This presupposes that at least important parts of this institution had nothing ‘sacred’ or ‘natural’ about them, but rather that they represented *nomos*. The democratic movement […] is not confined to the struggle around explicit power, it aims potentially at the overall reinstitution of society, and this is materialized through the creation of philosophy. Greek thought […] amounts *ipso facto* to the putting into question of the most important dimension of the institution of society: the representations and the norms of the tribe, and the very notion of truth.[99]

Therefore, politics is directly entangled with the ‘lucid’ realisation that an instituted society can be put into question by its politically active participants and the ‘deliberate’ reflection on how the *nomos*, the representations and norms of the tribe could be reinstituted.[100] What of the participation of the participants? Castoriadis suggests that what was radical about the 'political creation of the Greeks' was formalising a part of instituting power (both in the sense of legislation and 'private law') but also making that part institutionally '*open to participation,*' in the sense that all members of the 'body politic' could participate equally in determining 'legislation', 'jurisdiction' and 'government'.[101]

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[99] Castoriadis, ‘Power, Politics, Autonomy,’ 159-60 [emphasis in original].
[100] Castoriadis, ‘Power, Politics, Autonomy,’ 159-60.
[101] Ibid., 168-69 [emphasis in original]. In the same text, Castoriadis takes critically into account that parts of ancient Greek societies such as slaves and women did not participate in the demos: ‘Marxists and feminists would, no doubt, reply that the demos wielded power over slaves and women, and therefore "was the State." Should one then say that in the South of the United States whites "were the State" vis-a.-vis blacks until 1865? Or that French adult males "were the State" vis-a.-vis women until 1945? Or that today, everywhere, adults "are the State" vis-à-vis nonadults? Neither explicit power, nor domination need take the form of the State. […] Many explicit

Thus, importantly, for Castoriadis politics coincides with autonomy defined as 'the unlimited self-questioning about the law and its foundations as well as the capacity, in light of this interrogation, to *make*, to *do* and to *institute* (therefore also, to *say*).'[102]

Furthermore, the social-historical pertains directly to the emergence of politics as historical movement: 'The creation of democracy and philosophy is truly the creation of *historical movement* in the strong sense-a movement which, in this phase, deploys itself from the eighth to the fifth century, and is in fact brought to an end with the defeat of Athens in 404[BC].'[103] However, the conscious type of activity found in politics and aiming at autonomy is ultimately distinct in Castoriadis from institution as the social-historical creation of new significations. Rather, such conscious activity would pertain to what he defines as 'praxis' or, in other words, 'that doing in which the other or others are intended as autonomous beings considered as the essential agents of the development of their own autonomy.'[104] And as Dardot and Laval accurately observe, in Castoriadis, praxis is by definition emancipatory whereas institution-creation could in fact be alienating: 'If all authentic praxis carries institution-creation in its conscious expression, and thereby participates in it, institution-creation does not necessarily relate to praxis.'[105] Dardot and Laval's concept of instituent praxis begins at the critique of the duality that they locate within Castoriadis's thought:

> […] on the one hand, the activity of the anonymous collective that aims at nothing since it escapes the grip of consciousness yet creates imaginary significations (institution); on the other hand, a conscious activity that aims at and presupposes autonomy but

institutions in the democratic poleis, including some particularly repugnant to us (slavery, the inferior status of women), were never put into question on a practical basis.' Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy,' 157, 160.

[102] Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy,' 164 [emphasis in original].

[103] Ibid., 160-61 [emphasis in original]. Castoriadis has in mind the 'boldness' and 'radicality' of the 'Cleisthenian revolution' that sought to redistribute political power more equally among Athenian citizens. Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy,' 161.

[104] Castoriadis, *Imaginary Institution of Society*, 75.

[105] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 387.

> cannot decide on its own the destruction of ancient imaginary significations and their replacement with new ones (praxis).[106]

Dardot and Laval conceive of instituent praxis in order to theorise autonomy as directly entangled in the very process of institution/creation and, in order to do so, they redefine praxis as implicating the self-producing of collective subjects. This redefinition draws on Marx's conception of praxis, which they see as involving the 'self-production of its own subject by the self-transformation of the actor in and through the very action.'[107] Dardot and Laval consider Marx's conception of praxis to approximate Castoriadis's conception of psychoanalysis as pertaining to both 'poiesis' and praxis: the psychoanalytic work ('oeuvre (ergon)') coincides with the self-transformation of the activity's agent.[108] However, Dardot and Laval maintain that Castoriadis's conception of praxis in relation to politics strictly involves human autonomy as the end of the praxis, while in Marx, whether praxis has an emancipatory cause is irrelevant, as long as the self-production of its subject is involved.[109] Marx distinguishes emancipatory praxis from non-emancipatory praxis in that only the former makes a clean break with tradition and the past.[110] Dardot and Laval counter-argue that no praxis can actually make a clean break with tradition and the past and that emancipatory praxis cannot form an exception.[111] Therefore, for them, emancipatory praxis needs to be defined in line with the creation of the new in their conception of social-historical creation/institution (i.e. the new is not created ex nihilo but ex aliquo; conditioned but not caused by the past). Castoriadis, in turn, views all praxis as emancipatory praxis that always aims at autonomy and consciously makes explicit a part of society's instituent power.[112] Dardot and Laval's instituent praxis develops Castoriadis's idea of

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[106] Ibid., 390.
[107] Ibid., 393. Also see Karl Marx, 'Thesis on Feuerbach,' in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. & Norton, 1978), 144.
[108] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 393. Also see Cornelius Castoriadis, *Crossroads in the Labyrinth*, trans. Kate Soper and Martin H. Ryle (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), 13.
[109] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 393. Dardot and Laval also note the affinity between institution/creation in Castoriadis and praxis in Marx in terms of the irrelevance of their cause/end.
[110] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 394. Also see Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,' in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. & Norton, 1978), 597.
[111] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 394.
[112] Castoriadis, *Imaginary Institution of Society*, 86-90.

the over-and-above, as it were, self-conscious making-explicit of institution/creation of (a) *society* – the latter merely denoting a generic anonymous collective – into a praxis of a collective subject in the making, produced in and through the act of creating new imaginary significations in the form of rules.[113] Their definition of instituent praxis goes beyond the making explicit of instituent/implicit power. Although instituent praxis tends towards Castoriadis's definition of politics, it ultimately diverts from such a definition in a subtle yet deliberate distancing from power and a redefinition of praxis that largely accommodates their proposition on subjectivity (i.e. the self-production of the agents through the action itself).

Instituent praxis: Historicity, subjectivity and the invention of rules

Instituent praxis as conceived by Dardot and Laval eludes the binary of instituent and constituent power. Unlike instituent or implicit power, instituent praxis does not arise from an anonymous collective and pertains to the *explicit* insofar as it is *conscious*.[114] Yet, unlike constituent and explicit power that legitimises a subject of sovereign will, instituent praxis continuously produces its own proper subject.[115] According to Dardot and Laval, the exercise of constituent power is punctual and requires a presupposed subject, whereas instituent praxis can do away with a preexisting subject and produces its own proper one, which is constantly altered and renewed beyond the initial creative act.[116] Instituent praxis 'is self-production of a collective subject in and through the continuous co-production of rules of law.'[117] In order to further analyse the specifics of such an articulation, I will first focus on the continuous co-production of rules of law, then discuss the self-production of a collective subject and finally, return to the rules of law, without losing sight of all the

[113] Dardot and Laval make extensive use of Guattari's 'transversal' subject on which I elaborate further in following sections.
[114] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 398.
[115] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 398.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.

elements' inextricability in working in tandem and synthesising instituent praxis.

In line with their initial concern to address the type of praxis that would implicate the invention of rules of law and their capacity to become customs in the long-term, Dardot and Laval argue that emancipatory praxis is essentially instituent praxis conceived as 'conscious activity of institution' or 'co-institution of rules'.[118] Specifically, Dardot and Laval maintain that instituting consists primarily in introducing rules of law, albeit not in the sense of officialising already existing unofficial rules, nor however creating them ex nihilo.[119] They insist that instituent praxis, albeit creation of the new, does not and cannot come from nothing, but always arises from and takes place within already given conditions. Thus, Dardot and Laval identify two functions of the concept of instituent praxis, in terms of its temporality and the way it relates to historicity ('historicité'). The first function is to accentuate 'the creation of a new institution' as the institution of '*new* rules of law'.[120]

While instituent praxis presupposes an 'out of', which amounts to the already instituted and functions as a heavily conditioning heritage, it also establishes new rules that retrospectively assign such heritage with a meaning it couldn't have had before.[121] The second function of instituent praxis 'is to reveal the absolute necessity for a continued instituent activity beyond the inaugural act.'[122] Dardot and Laval assert that 'once in place, the *instituted* tends to autonomise itself from the act that put it in place by virtue of an intrinsic inertia against which it has to continuously struggle.'[123] Thus, instituent praxis establishes a new system of rules which it constantly tries to relaunch so as to prevent the instituent from being fixed to the instituted: 'instituent praxis

[118] Ibid., 395.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., 397 [emphasis added].
[121] Ibid., 397. This resonates directly with the function of the radical imaginary as defined by Castoriadis.
[122] Ibid., 397-98.
[123] Ibid., 398 [emphasis added].

anticipates consciously and from the start the necessity to modify and reinvent the instituted which is posited precisely so that it persists and endures.'[124]

In Dardot and Laval's conception of instituent praxis, this function of historicity is inextricable from the function of subjectivity. Referring to instituent praxis, they suggest that

> it always arises out of something, it is always to be accomplished in situ, 'within' and 'out of' given conditions that it has not produced and yet, at the same time, it brings about new conditions and *thereby* accomplishes a true 'subjectivation' by producing new subjects through the self-alteration of the actors.[125]

Thus, the production of new subjects through the self-alteration of the actors becomes possible in and through the bringing about of new conditions within and out of given ones; the function of historicity becomes a common denominator for the emergence of new conditions in terms of praxis and the concurrent subjectivation.

Dardot and Laval associate such subjectivation with the 'emergence of a *collective* subject' founded on transversality. Guattari articulates his ideas on transversality in relation to institutional psychoanalysis or 'institutional therapeutics' and in this context he draws a distinction between independent (or 'subject') groups and 'dependent' groups.[126] The former are groups that attempt to determine their own behavioural patterns and invent their own means of understanding their aims, while the latter are unable to consider their own perspective and end up automatically adapting to copied structuring.[127] Transversality is a quality found in groups that tend towards the independent type and pertains to the interstices of verticality as hierarchy and horizontality as impromptu, instant spontaneity.[128] According to Guattari, transversality can

[124] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 398.
[125] Ibid., 395 [emphasis added].
[126] Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, 107 (See Introduction, fn. 24).
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., 112-13.

be put into practice when different levels of a hierarchy fully communicate with one another and importantly, when the communication process reflects and involves 'different meanings' – understood as discordant meanings.[129]

Transversality and the independent/dependent parameter also relate to the group's preservation. Guattari holds that subject groups can be in a 'position of having to bring about their own death' while dependent groups are subjugated to 'mechanisms of self-preservation' and survive what they perceive as 'external', 'rejecting all possibility of the dialectical enrichment that arises from the group's otherness.'[130]

In this context, Guattari – perhaps unlike Castoriadis – begins to elucidate the participation of the individual in the formation of imaginary significations. Referring to group phantasy that operates through symbolic imagery, Guattari suggests that

> individual phantasizing never respects the particular nature of this symbolic plane of group phantasy. On the contrary, it tries to absorb it, and to overlay it with particular imaginings that are "naturally" to be found in the various roles that could be structured by using the signifiers circulated by the collective.[131]

Guattari holds that the individual imaginary that overlays collective signifiers irrespectively of the group phantasy can be responsible for the crystallisation and rigidification of the group's structure and prevent potential dialogue with anything that could lead to a self-questioning of the group's established rules.[132] In other words, it makes it possible for the group to relapse into being dependent. However, Guattari argues that transversality can catalyse an emergent subjectivity that is located in between the collective and the individual. Transversality initiates an 'analytic process' by which the individual can 'use the group as a mirror'; unless the group is 'alienated' and submitted to a distorted self-image, the group can operate as a 'signifying chain' that

[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid., 118-19.
[131] Ibid., 108.
[132] Ibid., 108-09.

presents to the individual his/her self-image beyond his/her neurosis or psychosis.[133]

Dardot and Laval return to this Guattarian legacy which 'introduces the dimension of the unconscious into the group and the dimension of the collective into subjectivity'.[134] They redress the 'institutional question' of 'how to prevent the institution from becoming rigid and closing off in itself' taking into account the function of the death instinct that Guattari refers to in relation to the subject-group.[135] In other words, Dardot and Laval underline that, in such terms, the possibility of the structuralisation and closure of the group or the institution can be a corollary of subjectivation and thus an inherent characteristic of the group, as opposed to always deriving from factors external to the group.[136] Through Guattari's ideas on institutional psychotherapy, Dardot and Laval stress the importance of 'the requirement of differentiation and heterogeneity that could accommodate each singularity within the collective's interior' in tackling the possibility of rigidification and the institution's sclerosis.[137] Furthermore, Dardot and Laval draw on Guattari's distinction between 'groups that receive their law from the outside and groups that claim to be based on the assumption of an internal law' in order to rearticulate the institutional question in relation to both language and psychoanalysis respectively.[138] Regarding the opposition between 'enunciation' and language as 'code', they assert that the dependent or 'subjugated' group is 'petrified within language as code[;] it is no longer capable of making a new enunciation and it is condemned to repeat the already enunciated.'[139] In this light, they reframe the institutional question by asking 'how can a certain structure allow a group to make an enunciation capable of disturbing the order of the code and at the same time help the group disalienate from the code.'[140] In such

[133] Ibid., 116.
[134] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 399.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., 401.
[138] Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, 64.
[139] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 400.
[140] Ibid.

terms, ‘code’ is understood as the (internal) law of the group, revealing the intricate relation between the creation of new significations and rules. In psychoanalytic terms, the group’s phantasy or its distorted imagery which is ‘recounted in an officialised and stereotypical history’ functions as the code and thus, ‘the group’s relation to its unconscious’ becomes precisely ‘what can help the group escape its own self-closure.’[141] Therefore, Dardot and Laval’s understanding of transversality as the dimension that allows ‘the group to seize the meaning [“sens”] of its praxis and subjectivities to engage in an effective transformation’ becomes crucial in addressing the institutional question: ‘the collective always has to be related to a praxis through which it can make of itself what it is.’[142] Importantly, Dardot and Laval’s instituent praxis is conceived as a ‘transversal praxis’, through which ‘the enunciation that prevents the institution’s self-closure’ can be made.[143]

We might thus begin to grasp how the self-production of a collective subject takes place essentially *in and through* the continuous and defined by historicity co-production of rules of law, in the sense of the internal law of a subject-group. Dardot and Laval side with an alternative definition of institutionalisation that they find in the writings of psychoanalyst Jean Oury.[144] In their interpretation of Oury’s definition, institutionalisation appears as ‘neither the creation of new institutions *by law* – as in [Chaïm] Perelman – nor the officialisation of what already unofficially exists as unrecognised, but [as] the permanent reinvention of the institution through which the group that created [the institution] can counter its own inertia.’[145] The rules of law or ‘collective rules’ that instituent praxis puts forth are not as rigid as ‘“laws” or “codes”’ and thus, their ‘permanent reinvention becomes possible in advance.’[146] Collective rules are

[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Jean Oury was the founder and director of the experimental psychiatric clinic La Borde (1953) at Cour-Cheverny, France. This is where Guattari worked and developed his ideas on schizoanalysis.
[145] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 398-99 [emphasis added]. See: Jean Oury, *Psychiatrie et Psychothérapie Institutionnelle* (Nîmes: Champ Social, 2001), 234-35. Also see: Chaïm Perelman, *Droit, Morale, Philosophie* (Paris: LGDJ, 1968).
[146] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 399.

not primarily meant to become official law. Dardot and Laval insist that 'the space open for instituent praxis is situated beyond [or below] state legislation.'[147] Collective rules are created in and through subjectivation – the group's countering of its own inertia.

Instituent praxis does not only consist in reforming already existing rules; their *reinvention* implies that the rules bring about new social significations. Referring to the 'recuperations' or occupations of Brukman and Global factories in Argentina (2003 and 2004 respectively) Dardot and Laval maintain that the workers-led organisation of work (either through equality of wages and direct participation of all workers in the decision-making process, as in the Brukman case, or the hierarchical and representational decision-making amongst workers in the Global case) faced difficulties that related to the organisational heritage that was inevitably carried on by the workforce unconsciously or as a reaction against new conditions.[148] Specifically, Dardot and Laval argue that the new (interior) dynamics of power inequality that both cooperative structures entailed – largely due to broader social uncertainty – resulted in the intensification of 'self-sacrifice by task' whereby the perpetuation of the previous culture of 'fast production' can be interpreted as a reaction to the new conditions.[149] According to Dardot and Laval, these examples demonstrate that 'instituent praxis always faces the risk of failing to promote new social significations.'[150]

In order to understand what such a promotion would amount to in relation to instituent praxis it is essential to return to the notion of historicity and the necessity of its function within Dardot and Laval's conceptual construction.

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[147] Ibid., 400.
[148] Ibid., 400-01. Argentina suffered a period of Great Depression between 1998 and 2002, which involved riots, unemployment, the fall of the government, the defaulting of Argentina's debt to the IMF and lack of liquidity which led to the closing down of many enterprises. Workers of some small and medium scale closed-down businesses decided to reopen them and turn them into cooperatives. Some were actually bought from the owners while others were occupied illegally.
[149] Maxime Quijoux, *Néolibéralisme et Autogestion: L'Expérience Argentine* (Paris: IHEAL, 2011), 266, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 401.
[150] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 401.

Against the backdrop of their initial research question regarding the type of praxis that can invent rules of law capable of becoming long-term customs, Dardot and Laval consider the relationship between the emergence of new significations and rules of use in language.[151]

What they seek to explore conceptually is the paradigmatic – and potentially extendable to the rest of the 'social-historical' realm – quality of language through which significations emerge in a self/subject-transformative process not as combinations of already existing significations, but as radically new.[152] To this end, they consider and ultimately discard a Wittgensteinian method of analysis that makes an analogy between rules of linguistic use and rules in play.[153] Through an association with play, this analogy would aim to undermine the reduction of language to mere calculation, reverberating with the aforementioned opposition between enunciation and language as code.[154] However, Dardot and Laval maintain that such analogy oftentimes casts all normativity to meaningful/significative linguistic use and assumes that such use amounts in essence to 'indefinitely revisable' rules (as the case would be in play).[155] Dardot and Laval's remark arguably implies that linguistic normativity should not be seen as one and the same with linguistic use that carries meaning, as though meaningless/senseless linguistic use were by definition non-normative (it is not) and as if meaningful linguistic use were a positivist, always canon-affirming and thereby ahistorical set of rules. Such misconception would exclude the possibility of precisely what Dardot and Laval are researching, i.e. the potential for conscious invention of rules that makes new significations emerge (through variations of use).

The authors examine further the pertinence of rules in play to the relationship between organisations and institutions, in line with their concern to understand the emergence of new significations within the broad realm of the social-

[151] Ibid., 396.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Recherches Philosophiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).
[154] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 396.
[155] Ibid.

historical. They identify three overarching institutional/economic approaches. The approach of the institutional economy of 'the Commons' – adopted, among others, by Bernard Chavance – equates institution and organisation; an institution amounts to any organised social structure including its corresponding rules.[156] This approach includes all sorts of social formations from the family and the corporation to trade associations and the State.[157] A second approach that Dardot and Laval identify and attribute to economists Douglas C. North and Leonid Hurwizc assimilates the organisations with 'players' and the institutions with the 'rules' of the game.[158] Finally, the third approach credited by Chavance to economists such as Masahiko Aoki, Avner Greif, Andrew Schotter and Robert DeYoung regards the institution as an equitably-balanced 'self-sustained system of beliefs that the players share about how the game is played.'[159] Dardot and Laval consider all three approaches to be valuable in that they 'denaturalise the market and the corporation' by revealing them as 'institutions of capitalism.'[160] At the same time, they find the analogy with the game and its rules problematic, in its failure to elucidate the '*creation* of institutions.'[161] Taking their cue from Chavance, they argue that this analogy takes the initial rules of the game for granted without considering them in relation to their previous institutional history, as if they were 'purely technical' and ahistorical.[162]

It is particularly interesting to note the grounds on which Dardot and Laval consider the approach of the Commons to be inadequate, as far as the invention of rules of conduct of organisations or institutions is concerned. The

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[156] Ibid., 397. The authors cite economist Bernard Chavance's book *L'Économie Institutionnelle*, although not as a singular or representative author of this approach. See Bernard Chavance, *L'Économie Institutionnelle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012)
[157] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 397.
[158] Ibid. See Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Dardot and Laval do not give a reference for Hurwicz. See: Leonid Hurwicz, 'Institutions as Families of Game Forms,' *The Japanese Economic Review* 47, No. 2 (June 1996):113-32, accessed April 3, 2016, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5876.1996.tb00038.x.
[159] Chavance, *L'Économie*, 74, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 397.
[160] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 397.
[161] Ibid. [emphasis added]
[162] Ibid.

authors argue that the method employed by the institutional economy of the Commons replaces a 'natural selection' of rules with an 'artificial'[163] one in order to overcome the aforementioned problem of the Common Law whereby custom is 'the productive source' of law.[164] Dardot and Laval consider such approach to be valuable in that it is grounded neither on spontaneous invention of rules nor on always-retrospective recognition, since it amounts to the 'selection/formalisation' of 'certain customs upon occasions of arbitrage of conflicting interests.'[165] However, Dardot and Laval assert that, ultimately, it fails to escape its grounding on custom and thus remains caught up in the aforementioned problem.[166] By contrast, their concept of instituent praxis is not grounded on custom: it emphasises artificiality over spontaneity or naturalness. What is more, as opposed to the aforementioned approaches of rules in play, such artificiality is not ahistorical; it takes into account the historicity which is found in the production of (the unconscious of) a subjectivity in the making.

Instituent praxis is artificial

The artificiality of instituent praxis should be strongly emphasised but also further elucidated and developed in terms of its connection to the Guattarian conceptual legacy of transversality, the production of subjectivity and 'autopoiesis' (self-creation) in terms of (and as I will show, beyond) signification.[167] Through this connection it becomes possible to navigate through and map more fruitfully threads and constellations within an expanded field of practices pertaining to diverse social entities such as art institutions/organisations, managerial practices, forms of labour, curatorial strategies, subjectivity-shaping technological or other machines of communication and their points of interrelation or conflict.

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[163] Chavance, *L'Économie*, 31-32, quoted in Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 396-97.
[164] Dardot and Laval, *Commun*, 396-97.
[165] Ibid., 397.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 13 (See Introduction, fn. 24).

As Andrew Goffey has observed, Guattari's psychoanalysis sought to gear the relation of the 'real' away from the 'impossible' and toward the 'artificial'.[168] Goffey argues that Guattari's conception of the real *as the artificial* is not a negative proclamation pointed at structural edifices. Rather, it situates the real within experimentation and points to the artificial quality of the phantasm of the unconscious and historicity qua creation and subjective transformation.[169] This understanding of the real-as-artificial and the association of its plasticity with the subject group or, in Goffey's words, 'the unconscious that in the institution effects ongoing generative movement of transversality through which subjectivity is transformed' could not be more in line with the operative mechanisms of instituent praxis in terms of subjectivity in its own making.[170] Guattari's artificiality refers to 'the creative character of the production of subjectivity' and the suggested 'Unconscious' is a post-structuralist one, in that it goes beyond 'structure and language' and is *made of* multiple and diverse components in a process of autopoiesis – a 'reappropriation […] of the means of production of subjectivity.'[171] Guattari advocates for a 'co-management' of this autopoietic process which is an urge that despite its ambiguous terminological indications aims at opposing 'attitudes of authority' in psychoanalysis, from unifying schemata dominated by 'cut, lack or suture'[172] to objective/scientific models.[173]

From new significations to the 'machinic assemblage of enunciation'[174]

In promoting the creation of new significations, we need to also problematise the epistemology and internal power relations of signification itself and further

[168] Andrew Goffey, 'Guattari and Transversality: Institutions, Analysis and Experimentation,' *Radical Philosophy*, No. 195 (Jan/Feb 2016): 46, accessed March 17, 2016, https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/wp-content/files_mf/rp195_article_goffey_guattariandtransversality.pdf.
[169] Goffey, 'Guattari and Transversality,' 46.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 8-13.
[172] Ibid., 45.
[173] Ibid., 12.
[174] Ibid., 24.

examine the fluid architecture and economics of the artificiality of subjectivation that are arguably focal to the current historical moment. I would suggest that Dardot and Laval's conception of creation of significations as entirely new (albeit cum and ex aliquo) should be further expanded through the Guattarian system of enunciation that point toward the multiple creative and autopoietic registers among signifying as well as 'a-signifying' elements.[175] Guattari warns of the reduction of the 'a-signifying economy of language' to the 'linguistic, significational' one while suggesting that the production of subjectivity entails 'a-signifying semiological dimensions that trigger informational sign machines, and that function in parallel or independently of the fact that they produce and convey significations and denotations, and thus escape from strictly linguistic axiomatics.'[176] Guattari is essentially rejecting what he sees as the 'structuralist' enforcement of a relationship of dependence between the realm of the 'psyche' and the 'linguistic signifier', whereby the latter is always granted with 'primacy' over the former.[177] He renounces Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis in that it reduces psychoanalytic events to the function of the structuralist signifier, which thereby overdetermines the self-creative ontological modalities within such events: 'The structure, here, precedes and envelops the machine in an operation that strips it of all its autopoietic and creative characteristics. The symbolic order weighs down like a deterministic lead cape, like a deathly fate, on the possible bifurcations of incorporeal Universes.'[178] Referring to the 'Lacanian signifier,' Guattari writes: 'Its fundamental linearity, inherited from Saussurian structuralism, does not allow it to apprehend the pathic, non discursive, autopoietic character of partial nuclei of enunciation.'[179] Guattari here refers to the Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic and semiotic tradition of structuralism which he sees as entirely active in Lacan's psychoanalysis: 'Structuralists have been content to erect the Signifier as a category unifying all expressive economies: language, the icon,

[175] Ibid., 36.
[176] Ibid., 4-5.
[177] Ibid., 5.
[178] Ibid., 74. Also see Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), 103-4.
[179] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 72.

gesture, urbanism or the cinema, etc.'[180] For Guattari, 'the structuralist signifier is always synonymous with linear discursivity' and it is the predominance of such linearity that he problematises and complicates.

He posits in particular a 'schizoanalytical perspective' whereby 'forms of semiological, semiotic and coded linearity' are further diversified and thus the aforementioned binary relationship of dependence can be seen as overthrown.[181] For instance, in a merely indicative assemblage of diverse registers of linearity, Guattari refers to

> the semiological linearity of the structural signifier which imposes itself despotically over all the other modes of semiotisation, expropriates them and even tends to make them disappear within the framework of a communicational economy dominated by informatics (please note: informatics in its current state [1993], since this state of things is in no way definitive)

as well as 'the superlinearity of a-signifying substances of expression, where the signifier loses its despotism' such as the 'dynamic polymorphism' of 'hypertexts.'[182] Guattari understands 'a-signifying semiotics' as 'figures of expression that might be qualified as "non-human" (such as equations and plans which enunciate the machine and make it act in a diagrammatic capacity on technical and experimental apparatuses)' independently 'of the quantity of significations they convey.'[183] This is where Guattari grounds his concept of the 'a-signifying semiotic machine', examples of which are the 'credit card number' as much as 'the pentatonic musical refrain', since apart from producing significations, both semiotic machines 'activate the "bringing into being" of ontological Universes' and thus work against the reduction of 'ontological polyvocality'[184] by the structuralist signifier.[185] Guattari suggests

[180] Ibid., 37. Guattari does not refer to any specific Saussure's writings. See: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1993).
[181] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 48.
[182] Ibid., 48-49. In the same example, Guattari also refers to 'the coding of the "natural" world', 'the relative linearity of biological codings' and 'the linearity of pre-signifying semiologies'.
[183] Ibid., 36.
[184] Ibid., 29.
[185] Ibid., 49. Guattari defines 'Universes' as 'incorporeal domains of entities we detect at the same time that we produce them, and which appear to have been always there, from the moment we

that the credit card number is a sequence of semiotic parts but also an activator of 'material machinic processes' as soon as it interacts with technological machines.[186] Relatedly, the pentatonic refrain 'catalyses the Debussyst constellation of multiple Universes' including the 'Wagnerian Universe surrounding Parsifal,' the 'Universe of Gregorian chant,' the work of Chopin, the 'Javanese music Debussy discovered at the Universal Exposition of 1889' and 'the world of Manet and Mallarme, which is associated with Debussy's stay at the Villa Medicis.'[187]

In order to better grasp the concept of the a-signifying semiotic machine we need to approach it through its direct relation to machinic or 'partial subjectivity.'[188] Through the latter concept Guattari develops his previous ideas on the subject-group into a version of subjectivity which is 'pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic.'[189] This concept of subjectivity expands Dardot and Laval's Guattarian register of collective subjectivity in relation to instituent praxis. Partial subjectivity is collective, not only in pertaining to social groups or entities, but also in its association with the pre-personal or the 'pathic' – as the trans-subjective empathy frequently encountered in 'infancy and psychosis' and situated *before* the 'discursive, subject-object relation'.[190] Guattari also connects the production of partial subjectivity with a non-human aspect in terms of 'the large-scale social machines of language and the mass media – which cannot be described as human.'[191] Such conception of subjectivity is inextricable from its *machinic* element, which denotes subjectivity's positioning 'before and alongside the subject-object relation', its 'collective character', the multiplicity and diversity of its components that include 'incorporeal dimensions.'[192] Crucially, Guattari does not equate the

engender them.' Thus, they are paradoxical in the sense that 'they are given in the creative moment, like a hecceity freed from discursive time – nuclei of eternity lodged between instants.' See Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 17.

[186] Ibid., 49.
[187] Ibid., 49-50.
[188] Ibid., 21.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid., 25-26.
[191] Ibid., 9.
[192] Ibid., 24.

machinic element with the technological or the technical nor does he use it to merely make a social metaphor: 'We should bear in mind that there is a machinic essence which will incarnate itself in a technical machine, and equally in the social and cognitive environment connected to this machine – social groups are also machines, the body is a machine, there are scientific, theoretical and information machines.'[193] Hence, he refers to 'abstract machines' or 'machinic assemblages' that not only consist of 'heterogeneous components' but also 'heterogenise' these components 'beyond any unifying trait and according to a principle of irreversibility, singularity and necessity.'[194] Some indicative components include matter and energy, 'semiotic, diagrammatic and algorithmic components', 'individual and collective mental representations and information' as well as 'investments of desiring machines producing a subjectivity adjacent to these components.'[195] The abstract quality of the machinic assemblage is essentially a transversal one in the sense of involving heterogeneous components without 'any notion of bond passage or anastomosis' or of a 'generic or species' relation.'[196] Thus, the diverse machinic components maintain their diversity even though they remain parts of the same machine and without necessarily being reducible to a commonality based on a species relation or other form of generic relation.

More broadly, the two key notions that run through the Guattarian conceptual framework of machinic assemblages and partial subjectivity are autopoiesis and 'heterogenesis'.[197] Machinic assemblages are essentially autopoietic and heterogenetic. Autopoiesis as a term expands the notion of self-creation and production of subjectivity into the terrains of the a-signifying and the machinic in accordance with the aforementioned traits of partial subjectivity. Heterogenesis brings into play alterity and 'alterification' in the sense of, first, the disruption of the structuralist relation of the representational signifier as

[193] Ibid., 38-39.
[194] Ibid., 39-40.
[195] Ibid., 34-35.
[196] Ibid., 35.
[197] Ibid., 39.

attached to particular types of subjects and second, unlimited incorporeal 'Universes of virtuality' or 'ontogenetic' Universes.[198] These 'constellations of Universes' are not 'Universals': 'The fact that they are tied into singular existential Territories effectively confers upon them a power of heterogenesis, that is, of opening onto singularising, irreversible processes of necessary differentiation.'[199] Guattari suggests that '[m]achinic interfaces are heterogenetic; they summon the alterity of the points of view we might have on them and, as a consequence, on the systems of metamodelisation which allow us to account, in one way or another, for the fundamentally inaccessible character of their autopoietic nuclei.'[200] Thus, machinic heterogenesis pertains to the *infinite* generating of diverse and multiple ontology and virtuality that approximates an accounting for the inaccessibility of machinic autopoiesis, an inaccessibility that becomes evident if the machinic assemblage is thought of as proto-subjective, incorporeal, virtual, and – for that matter – autopoietic, rather than a (purely) technical or technological structure that executes orders. For Guattari, even a wall constitutes a 'proto-machine' that manifests 'virtual polarities, an inside and outside, an above and below, a right and left ...', contrary, however, to 'a heap of stones' which interestingly is *not* a machinic assemblage.[201]

It is in this context that Guattari's focus on enunciation must be examined. For Guattari, 'concrete and abstract'[202] machines possess a 'singular power of enunciation'.[203] Machinic assemblages are essentially enunciative. Enunciation pertains to the a-signifying as it does not concern itself with signification, but also goes beyond semiotics. It nods to 'the emergence of a logic of non-discursive intensities' and the 'pathic incorporation-agglomeration' of the pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic elements of partial subjectivity.[204] Guattari emphasises enunciation in order to shift the focus from

[198] Ibid., 30, 44, 45.
[199] Ibid., 55.
[200] Ibid., 30-31.
[201] Ibid., 42.
[202] Ibid., 124.
[203] Ibid., 34.
[204] Ibid., 22.

'human individuation' and reject universalising psychoanalytic models.[205] Instead of the traditional conception of the subject 'as the ultimate essence of individuation' and 'as a pure, empty, prereflexive apprehension of the world,' Guattari's conception of subjectivity aims at focusing on 'the founding instance of intentionality' by starting from 'the middle' of the subject-object relation and 'foregrounding the expressive instance.'[206] This different departure point is inextricable from Guattari's postulation of reversibility between the categories of 'Content' and 'Expression', which have traditionally been opposed in a sacrosanct polarity, since '[c]ontent participates in subjectivity by giving consistency to the ontological quality of Expression.'[207] Guattari rejects this polarity and places the focus on enunciation in an effort to promote and expand the 'substance of Expression' from 'semiology and semiotics' to 'extra-linguistic, non-human, biological, technological, aesthetic' fields.[208]

In this context, Guattari identifies a process by which enunciation appropriates aesthetic form through 'the autonomisation of cognitive or ethical content and the realisation of this content in an aesthetic object.'[209] This process is also encountered in the 'transference of subjectivation' between the creator and the consumer of a work of art (a transference that elaborates further on the avant-garde workings mentioned in Chapter 1); 'aesthetic form' is employed in such a way that renders the 'expressive material' 'formally creative' while the work's content breaks from its usual cognitive and aesthetic 'connotations' and forces the creator almost telepathically into producing a 'mode of aesthetic enunciation.'[210]

Considering this in relation to the readymade, a different reading of the Duchampian avant-garde might be attempted, one that takes the subversion of artistic authorship one step further than the mere postulation of art

[205] Ibid., 21-22.
[206] Ibid., 22.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid., 24.
[209] Ibid., 13.
[210] Ibid., 14.

production as something that could be or is pursued by anyone. As per Foster, the readymade could be seen as carrying multiple other functions than Duchamp's allegedly pre-determined intention to sublate art and life. A Guattarian interpretation would hold that artistic authorship should be seen in the context of a partial subjectivity whereby the expressive instance is being foregrounded in a framework of enunciation. This reading would also go beyond the generalising and simplifying Bürgerian account according to which the work's (social and political pre-destined by the author) content is being neutralised by being accepted as a work of art, as if the content could suddenly do away with its aesthetic connotations and as if its aesthetic connotations can simply be imposed on it externally. The anti-aesthetic intention does away with aesthetics as much as the duality of content and expression remains a clean-cut antithesis. Rather, the work of art is inscribed in a complex system of multiple subjectivations that go well beyond the (intention of) the author: they involve the creation of form by the material and are able to bring about new modes of aesthetic enunciation attached to a framework of machinic enunciative assemblages of partial subjectivity. Referring to the a-signifying semiotic machine of the pentatonic musical refrain and the Universes generated by it, Guattari claims that 'there is no bi-univocal correspondence between linear signifying links or archi-writing, depending on the author, and this multireferential, multidimensional machinic catalysis.'[211] Thus, the conceptual grid comprising the creation of new significations, aesthetic objects and artistic authorship as human individuation could be rethought within a machinic, a-signifying context through the overriding concept of enunciation that pertains to machinic assemblages, pathic and partial subjectivity.

Transitional remarks/ Outro

In this chapter, I have suggested that what is particular about the institution has to do with deontic powers as power relations, rights, obligations and collectively accepted systems of rules, which do not necessarily relate with

[211] Ibid., 50.

official regulation: they can be constitutive rather than regulative. I have asserted that this definition needs to be politically and historically contextualised and I have proposed instituent praxis as reflecting the political ontology of institution in a more theoretically sustained fashion than previous articulations. The relation of Raunig's instituent practices to constituent power remains ambivalent and seems to prioritise such power over the concept of the instituent in terms of aspects of subjectivity. I have argued that Hardt and Negri's theory of constituent power that always strives not to become sovereign power as constituted power understands institutions predominantly as arbiters of continuity, normality and representation rather than conflictual or creative processes. The latter aspects are assigned to singularities and their instantiations of constituent power. I have concurred with Dardot and Laval's skepticism towards the necessity and efficiency of the concept of constituent power, not least as it tends to exhaust itself in particular heterogeneous practices while remaining caught up in the political and philosophical tradition of constitutions.

Instituent praxis differs from constituent/explicit power in that it does not seek to *legitimise* a sovereign will (against the will of a ruling power). Instituent praxis *produces* its own proper, non-pre-existing subject in and through the creation of new significations that aspire to become constitutive rules rather than or before official legislation. Instituent praxis differs from instituent power (or ground-power) in that it is a conscious praxis which involves subjectivity, even if the unconscious is active and present. Historicity and subjectivity are imbricated in the creation of the new, which is conditioned by the past but not caused by it. This relation in its pertinence to the production of subjectivity and signification is expanded in a Guattarian framework of machinic assemblages of enunciation. Subjectivity is understood as machinic, pre-personal, nonhuman, pathic and collective and enunciation crucially involves asignification.

In their attempt to draw on Guattari's early psychoanalytical writings where the institutional register is relatively more present than his later writings, Dardot

and Laval do not go beyond the subject-group as the terminological vehicle for the transformation of subjectivity. However, in a context that aims at gearing this discussion toward an expanded field of sensible and legible forms – from all sorts of media and platforms to all sorts of creative, cultural and discursive forms of production, organisation and distribution, Guattari's 'enunciative assemblages' that crucially include 'machinic' ones are arguably more pertinent. In other words, the operative mechanisms of subject-groups in terms of transformation of subjectivity could be thought of as directly transferable to enunciative assemblages. My aim here is to suggest that the perimeter for the appropriate terrains for transforming subjectivities and thus instituent praxis extends along not only rational or normative human discursive or social constructions but also what Sven Lütticken has called 'proto-legible' elements or signs (such as data).[212] This involves both human language as enunciation and language as code as well as *algorithmic* language, code and adjacent infrastructure (such as software). Lütticken has theorised the visible in its distinction from the visual and as pertaining to the 'proto-legible,' 'the world of the cliché,' 'iconology', 'semiotics,' and 'the code.' I examine such aspects further in Chapters 3 and 6.

The Guattarian framework permits a theorisation of such terrains in their conjunction with 'ethico-aesthetic' axes despite their distinct disciplinary epistemological frameworks (e.g. discursive, linguistic, aesthetic, administrative, engineering/programming, financial).[213] Goffey has aptly read the core of this relation in Guattari:

> This framing of the institution as a sort of modelling clay is an idea that has strong aesthetic resonances. It is perhaps as much in terms of Guattari's thinking about the institution, as in the context of any reference to contemporary art, that Guattari's later invocation of an 'ethico-aesthetic paradigm' should be understood.[214]

[212] Sven Lütticken, 'Social Media: Practices of (In)Visibility in Contemporary Art,' *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 40 (Autumn/Winter 2015): 15, accessed November 21, 2016, https://doi-org.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/10.1086/684212.
[213] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 10.
[214] Goffey, 'Guattari and Transversality,' 46.

I want to suggest that while Guattari theorises the artificial and creative subjectivation and relates it to desire-production, instituent praxis complicates such artificiality by understanding it in conjunction with the parameter of the co-production of *rules of law* as new significations. To this end, the aspect of instituent praxis that pertains to the invention of rules of law should in turn be examined in its porosity with various axes such as the signifying/a-signifying, the non-discursive, the pre-verbal/pre-personal, the non-human, the proto-subjective and the machinic. Only then will we be able to trace the intricate and diverse reach of the potential of instituent praxis relating to the transversal remit of the production of subjectivity. This methodological decision aims at employing the Guattarian legacy against the purely positivist or scientific echo that might be sensed in the proposition of the creation of new significations as co-production of rules of law. In other words, the aim of this proposition is not – or *should* not – be something that can be resolved in a meeting or concluded by a research project. The recent introduction of the GDPR legal framework reveals that a positivist/liberal approach addressing the issue of consent to the various uses of personal data by private corporations and by introducing the option to opt out is ultimately almost inconsequential to the appropriation of the pathic and the a-signifying aspects of subjectivity.

What Guattari might have not been able to fully historicise in the beginning of the 1990s is the imperceptible, perhaps unconscious but certainly thorough austerity through which the potential of collective subjectivity and desire-production, especially in its most pathic, machinic and heterogeneous enunciative instances, has been channeled by the twenty-first century global monopolies of information technology and infotainment. In an era when the emergence of technological networks that would allow a peer-to-peer and from the bottom production and dissemination of information and indeed knowledge still loomed plausible, speculation on the aftermath of global mass media would reasonably point towards a redistribution of the means of the production of subjectivity, one that would enhance rather than weaken autopoiesis and heterogenesis. However, the terms and conditions of the creation of new

significations and artificiality *are* currently entirely managed if not created by private/corporate power-asymmetrical algorithmic structures whose precise workings remain largely in obscurity but their overarching workings are profit-driven. Arguably, this monopolisation of artificiality, a-signifying semiotics and enunciative assemblages of desire-production indicates that subjectivity is not simply *overshadowed* by the structuralist/capitalist 'Signifier' as Guattari would suggest.[215] Guattari has posed the key question:

> How does this machinic heterogenesis, which differentiates each colour of being – which makes, for example, from the plane of consistency of a philosophical concept a world quite different from the plane of reference of the scientific function or the plane of aesthetic composition – end up being reduced to the capitalistic homogenesis of generalised equivalence, which leads to all values being valued by the same thing, all appropriative territories being related to the same economic instrument of power, and all existential riches succumbing to clutches of exchange value?[216]

The a-signifying realm of subjectivity is currently trapped in a paradoxical condition which exacerbates what Guattari might have thought of as the complex and systematic obfuscation of a-signifying ontogenetic instances. Arguably, such condition silently *promotes* the significance and hyperactivity of the a-signifying and the pathic while having entirely eroded the core mechanisms of autopoiesis and heterogenesis.

Put differently, the means of reappropriating the production of subjectivity are now on offer but their high level of pre-standardisation precludes the essential heterogenetic operations of 'alterity' or 'alterification' from the subjectivation process by only allowing them as exclusive marketable services. The ontologically *creative* mechanisms of heterogenesis are precluded; creation or artificiality operate within – but predominantly *for* – the homogenising equivalence of private profit and property, even as they accommodate difference and heterogeneity. Instituent praxis then would understand that

[215] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 36-40.
[216] Ibid., 55.

there is no inherent unappropriability amid heterogeneous ontological planes, given precisely the severe limitation of heterogenetic ontology. The challenge for such praxis would be to claim the *institution* of unappropriability from homogenising forces. The employment of the Guattarian legacy in order to not only apprehend instituent praxis but also to differentiate it from positivist scientific approaches does not constitute any form of resolution to the current conundrum of artificiality. A preliminary intention is to analyse its economics (i.e. its distributive conditions) that might perhaps allow for speculation on potential alternatives. Chapter 3 charts possible coordinates within such economics at the crossroads of the art world and intersecting realities.

3. The 'Back Office' of the Instituent: Infrastructure, Desiring Machines and the Economics of Artificiality

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the spectrum of strategies and practices where instituent praxis could begin to unfold focusing on a variety of areas, starting from art-institutional ones. The analysis will delve into theoretical propositions and tensions that have been lingering in the art-related bibliographical constituency of the instituent and, aware of such tensions, it will test out theoretical reconciliations within extended fields of practice. I turn to the logic of the instituent in its relation to (institutional) exit, relations in the workplace, management and organisation, filtered through subjectivity and creation. I also attempt some connections between the conceptual remit of instituent praxis and some of the urgencies of today's techno-capitalism – for instance, through the constitutive relation between desire and code, the channelling or the management of visibility and alternative takes on infrastructure in order to examine and speculate on an economics of artificiality.

Reclaiming existing institutions /Re-thinking exit

In the discourse that intersects art and the institution, there have been some critics who, while speaking from relatively diverse positions, have assertively argued against abandoning or withdrawing from existing institutions and strongly urged towards some form of 'reclaiming' extant structures. Mouffe schematically associates the post-Operaist tradition of thought with the political concept of 'exodus' as a clear standpoint of 'withdrawal' from existing institutions such as the State and state-relevant institutions, such as parties and trade unions.[1] From this perspective, as Mouffe argues, 'power organized

[1] Chantal Mouffe, 'Institutions as Sites of Agonistic Intervention,' in *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World*, ed. Pascal Gielen (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2013), 65-66.

around the Nation State and representative democracy' has become 'irrelevant' to the political currency of the post-Fordist, advanced capitalist era whereby all the political potential is to be found in the 'immaterial labour' aiming at 'the production of new subjectivities and the elaboration of new worlds that would create the conditions for the self-organization of the multitude'.[2] The multitude's common denominator would be the 'general intellect' which translates into 'perception, language, memory and feelings' and pervades 'contemporary production'.[3] For its self-organisation and in order to achieve forms of more immediate democracy, the multitude would have to free itself from 'all forms of belonging' by getting rid of 'institutional attachments'.[4] In the context of art and culture, Mouffe identifies the 'exodus' viewpoint with a 'strategy of withdrawal' from museums and artistic institutions.[5] Her counter-argument is an 'engagement with institutions' based on her general view that 'every order is the expression of a particular structure of power relations' and that 'what is at a given moment accepted as the "natural order" is always the result of sedimented hegemonic practices'.[6] For Mouffe, no literal or symbolic space or institution is exempt from the sedimentation of a hegemonic order and therefore, the potential for 'counter-hegemonic practices' could and should be pursued within all institutions – including traditional ones such as the State or the museum: 'instead of celebrating the destruction of all institutions as a move towards liberation, the task for radical politics is to engage with them, developing their progressive potential and converting them into sites of opposition to the neoliberal market hegemony.'[7]

It should be noted, however, that Mouffe is not arguing for a purely institutional politics as she asserts that 'agonistic spaces', the spaces where the counter-hegemonic struggle can take place, 'can emerge both inside and outside

[2] Mouffe, 'Institutions as Sites,' 65.
[3] Ibid., 65-66.
[4] Ibid., 66.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 66-67.
[7] Ibid., 67,71.

institutions.'[8] Despite what a dichotomy between an 'inside' and an 'outside' of institutions might at first glance suggest, Mouffe's theory places the institution at an abstract and contingent level. She acknowledges that 'society is always politically instituted and what is called "the social" is the realm of sedimented political practices, practices that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution'.[9] Beyond the specificity of an art space or a stagnant set of relations such as the State, institution here is clearly understood as the process that institutes *politically*. However, Mouffe does not touch upon the creation or initiation of such a process. The concept of 'agonistics' – the strong point of her theory – that rests upon her thesis that 'things could always have been otherwise and every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities' does not elucidate the *birth* of new or 'other' possibilities.[10] The assertion of the conflictual and the need for counter-struggles does not reveal much about whether the 'counter'-options already exist (even marginally) at a given moment or have to be created anew. Importantly, the way such a creation comes about and pertains to an institutional contingency remains a blank spot within Mouffe's account. This lack in Mouffe's theory (as well as other theories that argue for engagement with existing institutions) is what has necessitated the examination of theories of 'instituting' which tend to accentuate exodus or withdrawal as crucial to instituting anew in the greatest distance possible from existing institutional conditions. However, these come with shortcomings too as they often equate exodus or withdrawal with de-institutionalisation-in-action whereas for autonomist theorists, such as Paolo Virno, exodus (or exit) is formulated as a political concept that aspires to transgress dialectical schemata or oppositional dead-end binaries.[11] Therefore, at least in terms of strategy, Mouffe's theory is valuable in that it sees a relatively broader perimeter whereby the political potential of the institution could (also,

[8] Ibid., 69.
[9] Ibid., 67.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2004), 70.

potentially) be acted out; a perimeter that encompasses spaces both inside and outside specific institutions.

> 'Back in the 90s, Fisher shared the CCRU's exultant exaltation of the border-dissolving flows of capital and scorned socialism as a decrepit early 20th-century relic. But by the time he launched K-punk, he'd drifted back leftwards and for a while identified as a communist. More recently, Fisher sounded pragmatic notes, talking about working within existing institutions such as Labour (a prescient notion that arguably came true with Corbynism).'
>
> Simon Reynolds, 'Mark Fisher's K-Punk Blogs Were Required Reading for a Generation,' *The Guardian*, January 2017, accessed May 6, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/18/mark-fisher-k-punk-blogs-did-48-politics.

Another critic who sides with the non-abandonment of existing institution(s) through a multiplicity of micro-arguments is Mark Fisher. Fisher's general thesis is that the Left should aspire to be hegemonic and be in a position to 'manage and control things', as opposed to being a permanent opposition to 'neo-liberalism'.[12] In this respect, he rejects what he calls 'neo-anarchism', the political tendency that claims the downfall of political parties and trade unions while it embraces 'the self-organising and horizontal dynamics of the network against what it characterises as oppressive (and obsolete) hierarchical structures'.[13] Neo-anarchism is associated with 'direct action' or, in other words, tactics, such as the symbolic destruction of property, awkwardly caught up in-between 'protest', that 'presupposes a big Other, a commanding authority, who can hear the protest and respond to its demands' and 'prefiguration', that 'is supposed to do away with authority, to abandon demands, and immediately enact a new set of social relations'.[14]

Fisher seems not only skeptical towards such ambivalent action but also towards the politics of prefiguration in general. For Fisher, prefiguration entails

[12] Mark Fisher, 'The Commons As The Survival of The "Public": Panel with Andrea Phillips, Mark Fisher and Massimiliano Mollona,' (presentation at *Other Survivalisms*, Former West Public Editorial Meeting, Utrechts Archief, Utrecht, May 16, 2014).
[13] Mark Fisher, 'Accelerate Management,' in 'Management,' ed. Henric Benesch, Andrea Phillips, Erling Björgvinsson, *Parse Journal*, No. 5 (Spring 2017): 19.
[14] Fisher, 'Accelerate Management,' 19-20.

anticipation of 'future forms of (post-hierarchical) political organization' beyond the State and mass media.[15] Such politics involve a '*contagious withdrawal* from the structures of the State, capital and the media, which will spread through lateral networks,' and each movement-bearer of such politics would need to 'constitute itself as an immediately effective collectivity'.[16] Against such a perspective and the historical inefficacy of 'immediacy, spontaneity and authentic experience', Fisher suggests shifting the focus towards 'the (virtual and actual) infrastructures necessary for sustained social transformation'.[17] He asserts that 'systemic change necessarily entails action at a distance, since it requires shifts in economic organization, hegemony, ideology, infrastructure, as well as the practices of everyday life'.[18] Therefore, 'indirect action' is crucial for Fisher, given that capitalism is only experienced indirectly and abstractly.[19] Indirect action targeting 'the hegemonic and ideological infrastructures that frame what is experienced as reality' is, according to Fisher, what an anti-capitalist Left should be aiming at.[20] He also argues that although authoritarianism should be opposed, it should not be misinterpreted as authority, which is necessary for the Left to achieve systemic change.[21] For him, withdrawal has merely operated preemptively to the Left's defeat.[22]

In such context, Fisher has suggested that we should operate 'with and against' existing neo-liberal institutions, positing even that 'the space for the Left is […] especially *art* institutions' as 'this is where new ideas on the Left get circulated'.[23] He has urged workers of neo-liberal art institutions to abandon self-loathing or complacency and actively engage in transforming them.[24]

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[15] Mark Fisher, 'Indirect Action: Some Misgivings About Horizontalism,' in *Institutional Attitudes: Instituting Art in a Flat World*, ed. Pascal Gielen (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2013), 107.
[16] Fisher, 'Indirect Action,' 107 [emphasis in original].
[17] Fisher, 'Accelerate Management,' 19.
[18] Fisher, 'Indirect Action,' 108.
[19] Ibid., 107-08.
[20] Fisher, 'Accelerate Management,' 20.
[21] Fisher, 'Indirect Action,' 114.
[22] Fisher, 'The Commons: Panel.'
[23] Ibid. [emphasis added]
[24] Ibid.

Relatedly, he has noted that (in a UK context) 'clearly nothing has replaced what trade unions once did in terms of positing the workplace as a terrain of struggle'.[25] This is essentially a double prompt towards the direct re-politicisation of the workplace and the 'transformation of older bodies such as trade unions'.[26] The re-politicisation of the workplace could arguably amount to a reframing of work issues as political in a reminder that politics exists within work and not simply in designated public (or domestic) spaces, online or offline media and spaces of political representation. At the same time, it could be understood as a nod to widespread feminist, post-Operaist and other viewpoints that recognise the workplace as extending into unpaid work at home (for example, domestic or care labour) and the internet (use of social media). Such reframing of work issues should be tactical and register vernacular, discursive and official terms, so that it can act against the personified and individualistic and hierarchical treatment of political issues within work. In other words, only through the realisation that individual workers' issues could and should be commonly addressed and are therefore political could the re-politicisation of the workplace begin to take place against all forms of subsumption.

In relation to Fisher's suggested transformation of trade unions, new visions and strategic thinking would be required and, to this end, proposals are traceable within art production. For instance, artist and designer Tee Byford's project *The Social Mining Union* explicitly aims at formulating a new imaginary around unions through his artistic mining within the infrastructure of Glencore – a multinational commodity trading and mining company.[27] His preoccupation with Glencore permits him to address the shifts from the type of labour communities that developed in the paternalist and place-based context of industrial-era large-scale companies to the current state of unions within global capitalism. In Régine Debatty's blog 'we-make-money-not-art.com' Byford

[25] Ibid.
[26] Fisher, 'Indirect Action,' 113.
[27] 'The Social Mining Union,' Art Work, Tee Byford, 2014, accessed November 18, 2017, http://www.tearlach.co.uk/index.php/art-work/the-social-mining-union/.

claims that unions in the mining industry are currently weakened and lacking a sense of community. His practice experiments with symbolic action which could arguably be plausibly incorporated in a re-imagined union action. Byford exchanged found scrap metal material at South London scrapyards for money with which he bought one Glencore share. In May 2014, he managed to infiltrate Glencore's annual general meeting in Switzerland disguising himself as a major shareholder and raising the issue of fairer social and environmental policies in a Questions and Answers session. Through his practice, he proposed an alternative mapping of production [fig.1], which considers the cultural and financial value of the share as well as the cycle of use and waste in ways that might open up possibilities for the recalibration of existing structures of labour organisation and unionisation within the industry.

Far from discarding the tactical assets of 'neoliberal managerialism', Fisher promotes the combination of 'top-down' *and* 'decentralized' approaches in and through the 'invention of new kinds of institutions' *as well as* the transformation of existing ones.[28] In other words, vibrant and horizontal modes of protest such as Occupy (that aim at public realms and spaces as free from hierarchy) need to act in alignment with and ultimately renew political action in and through the broadly-defined workplace. Such propositions assert the potential of a strategic combination between the reclaiming of existing institutional structures, their transformation and the invention of new ones. To what extent is this merely reformist, pro-establishment or, simply put, too traditionally institutional? I would argue that in practice and in terms of the institution, Mouffe and Fisher do not have to constitute an opposite front to the autonomist one – the two fronts being very schematically and reductively assumed here only for the purposes of this particular argument. Considering the aforementioned clarification in relation to the concept of exodus, it could be argued that Virno would not suggest a pure withdrawal from all existing institutions. This is not simply due to the implausibility of such suggestion, but

[28] Fisher, 'Indirect Action,' 111, 113.

also because, according to him, the concept of exodus or 'exit' has a specific function:

> [I]t modifies the context within which a problem has arisen, rather than facing this problem by opting for one or the other of the provided alternatives. In short, *exit* consists of unrestrained invention which alters the rules of the game and throws the adversary completely off balance.[29]

In this respect, exodus or exit would not seem so different to the transformational reclaiming and the simultaneous invention of the new that Fisher ultimately suggests, at least insofar as the institution is concerned. It should be noted that Hardt and Negri's post-operaist approach falls short of such transformational conception. This is because even though they regard institutions as involving conflict, the institutional function is ultimately safeguarding the perpetuation and protection of norms and obligations.

Mouffe has elaborated on the practical application of her theoretical propositions in the context of art institutions. Specifically, she refers to the examples of the Museu d' Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) as well as 'L' Internationale', a 'confederation' of seven European art institutions that includes MACBA , Moderna Galerija in Slovenia, Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie in Poland, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS) in Spain, the Van Abbemuseum in the Netherlands, the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MuHKA) in Belgium and SALT in Turkey. In relation to MACBA, she argues that from 2000 to 2008 under the direction of Manuel Borja-Villel the museum countered dominant cultural narratives and practices and aligned itself with 'new social movements'.[30] Mouffe stresses the fact that the museum developed 'projects of critical pedagogy' which upheld the 'educational role' of the institution and its significance 'as a constituent part of the public sphere'.[31] She also mentions specific parts of the programming that were based on the collaboration of 'artist collectives and social

[29] Virno, *Grammar*, 70 [emphasis in original].
[30] Mouffe, 'Institutions as Sites,' 71-72.
[31] Ibid., 71.

movements', brought to the forefront marginal cultural facets of modernity, experimented with new and process-based exhibition formats and interacted with the city or other social forces.[32] Mouffe also praises the long-term collaboration between the art institutions that take part in L'Internationale network, which promotes the sharing of resources, 'collections and archives' towards challenging 'dominant narratives in the art world' and building 'new plural' ones.[33]

Indeed, MACBA experiments with its role as an institution largely through a participatory or community-conscious programming that welcomes and encourages political debate while it challenges dominant (art)institutional formats. Its incorporation of critical pedagogy testifies both to the broadening of its function as an institution and the challenging of hegemonic knowledge structures. Jorge Ribalta has referred to pedagogically and socially responsive institutional experimentation at MACBA in the period 2000-2008 as 'New Institutionality.'[34] L'Internationale's goal and vision reflects a similar contesting of dominant institutional patterns in the art world whereby the most powerful players are private galleries and collectors, auction houses or at best mega-institutions such as the Tate (*nominally* a public institution as it is privately funded by 70%).[35] The confederation's mission suggests that 'art and its institutions have the power to question and challenge their own specific systems, as well as the formal structures of institutions in general, and to be an appropriate platform for the discussion of a renewed social contract.'[36] One of the main research threads of L'Internationale's research platform is dedicated to 'Alter Institutionality' that aims at rethinking institutions.[37] It is also

[32] Ibid., 71-72.
[33] Ibid., 72.
[34] Jorge Ribalta, 'Experiments in a New Institutionality,' in *Relational Objects: MACBA Collections 2002-2007* (Barcelona: MACBA Publications, 2010)
[35] 'Tate Governance,' About Us, Tate, accessed July 5, 2018, https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/governance.
[36] 'About: L'Internationale,' L'Internationale, accessed May 19, 2018, https://www.internationaleonline.org/about.
[37] 'Alter Institutionality,' Research, L'Internationale, accessed May 19, 2018, https://www.internationaleonline.org/research/alter_institutionality/.

worth noting that the confederation's name refers to the homonymous left-wing anthem adopted by the Second International (1889-1916) and associated with the historical workers' movements of Internationals. Such activity by art institutions is valuable in terms of experimentation with institutional form. It is further discussed in subsequent chapters in relation to case studies that arguably complicate further the typical understandings of the art institution as such. Yet, it is important to note that Mouffe's (and Fisher's) theoretical propositions are extendable to a broader terrain than the programming or curatorial decision-making of art institutions. In fact, it is vital that the countering of dominant neoliberal art-world narratives be not confined to these fields but extend into the institution's labour conditions which, in turn, reflect its organisational process in terms of management. As Andrea Phillips notes insightfully, the 'front' of the institution needs to meet the 'back' of the institution in order to tackle the schizoid, albeit pervasive, situation whereby even the most left-leaning (in terms of programming and espoused discourse) art institutions are run on precarious and oppressive work conditions.[38] In order to dissolve the practical incompatibilities between occupying and unionising and aim at strategies that preserve the strengths of both, it is worth exploring whether or how instituent praxis could be associated with a mapping that goes beyond the fixation on the impossibility of a non-hierarchical utopia. Such praxis would preserve the democratic mode as a claim to the *nemein* that founds but also *invents* the communal nomos, through autopoiesis and heterogenesis. This would be an exploration that seeks the instituent both *within* and *beyond* the specific institutions, organisational entities and cultural practices that fall within the examined terrain.

[38] Andrea Phillips, 'The Commons As The Survival of The "Public": Panel with Andrea Phillips, Mark Fisher and Massimiliano Mollona,' (presentation at *Other Survivalisms*, Former West Public Editorial Meeting, Utrechts Archief, Utrecht, May 16, 2014). Phillips refers to the terms front/back and middle office, which are widely used in business practice and management theory. For instance, see: Mervyn King, *Back Office and Beyond: A guide to Procedure, Settlements and Risk in Financial Markets* (Petersfield, Hampshire: Harriman House/ Gilmour Drummond Publishing, 2003).

The back office: points of encounter between labour, management, creation and subjectivity

The preoccupation with art institutions in political-theoretical propositions such as Mouffe's and Fisher's reveals the urgency to consider the entanglements between management, labour and the institution. This becomes more evident in light of research into the topic of management as well as aspects of infrastructure within a curatorial and visual culture context. The need to examine the role of management and its relation to labour within art institutions has been strongly argued by Andrea Phillips who suggests that the various 'managerial and administrative structures […] imbricate certain politics within the ways we work together'.[39] Unlike political discourse in the context of art institutions that would consider managerial or administrative issues either of a secondary nature or tools in the service of the bureaucracy of neoliberalism, Phillips suggests that these are key areas that should be reclaimed and regarded at least as equally important as the content – or, I would add, the *format* – of exhibitions and other programming:

> […] What I am interested in is the managerial and organisational change that embeds political equality within an institution itself. This necessitates a more humble and administrative turn / approach in which the aesthetic is placed on lateral terms with the more mundane opening up of facilities and capacities, for example the negotiation of equality of pay, freedom of speech, of market transparency within the institution's workforce itself and towards its public.[40]

Phillips is, crucially, suggesting that such a shift within art institutions could be exported to *all kinds* of institutions since the (managerial) processes of neoliberalism are 'absolutely resonant within all civic institutions'.[41] Therefore, the potential she identifies within a 'managerial repurposing of the art institution as a form of very publicly proposing an alternative to capitalisation' also rests upon a paradigmatic function that the art institution could perform within a

[39] Phillips, 'The Commons: Panel.'
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

broader socio-economic terrain of institutions.[42] This is arguably a thoroughly radical suggestion since, for the most part, artistic labour has been hugely undervalued in that, traditionally, it has been relatively more susceptible to unpaid work, minute unionisation, unequal, undemocratic, authoritative and hierarchical relations in the workplace.

Initiatives, mostly in the form of collectives, in (or on the fringes of) the art world that have attempted to collectivise their artistic labour testify to the particularities of the field. Some indicative UK-based examples are the (art) activist groups Carrotworkers and Future Interns, a network of interns, artists and students organising against unpaid internships and work precarity. The former group expanded into Precarious Workers Brigade (since 2010), in a shift that, according to participator Susan Kelly, sought to go beyond the exceptionality of artistic labour.[43] The international platform Artleaks adopts various methods to expose and denounce unpaid work in official art institutions and adjacent narratives of self-realisation through voluntary creative work.[44] Issues around cultural labour are centrally addressed by the Free/Slow University of Warsaw, which I discuss further in Chapter 4. All in all, this type of activism takes the form of performance art or playful/mocking institutional intervention, as well as hands-on sharing of (practical) knowledge, archiving and tool-devising against forms of exploitation. When the work of such groups maintains an ambivalence between performance or symbolism and pragmatism or actuality has a significant function which I discuss further in Chapter 6. In terms of their pragmatic or practical concerns, even though of course affiliations exist between such groups, wider synergies across multiple contemporary labour forces and of the scale (once) achieved by traditional trade unions are yet to be accomplished. The US-based union United Autoworkers Local 2110 that deals with a wide vocational spectrum including

[42] Ibid.
[43] Susan Kelly, 'Collectives and Precarity,' presentation at Goldsmiths College Department of Art MFA Lectures, January 21, 2019.
[44] Notable equivalent US-based groups are Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), active between 1969 and 1971, and Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), founded in 2008.

artistic labour – famously involving workers of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York – would perhaps constitute a remarkable example of synergy:

> We represent teachers, secretaries, administrators, editors, computer operators, librarians, museum curators, typesetters and graphic artists, among many others. Our union has taken a lead in organizing women and workers in non-profits who have never been organized before. […] We have the experience necessary to organize and negotiate for 'white collar' workers.[45]

What the work of Local 2110 reveals is the need for labour issues to be rethought taking into account the pervasive presence of managerialism in the spatiotemporal interstices of the workplace, life and politics. It is at least dated – if not irrational – to exclude managers from a class or similar type of congregate of wage workers, whether by managers we mean account managers, junior assistants, store managers, art directors or social media users or even the figure of the artist as administrator, as per Buchloh's aesthetics of administration (discussed in Chapter 1). Importantly, this is not meant to neither neglect so-called blue-collar work nor undermine the issues pertaining to this type of work. The exclusion of blue-collar work from theoretical redefinitions of the labour class in the post-industrial era has been convincingly refuted by Virno:

> In the universe of the 'many', there is no longer room for blue collar workers, all of them equal, who make up a unified body among them, a body which is not very sensitive to the kaleidoscope of the 'difference' among them. This is a foolish way of thinking […] Neither in Marx, nor in the opinion of any serious person, is labor class equated with certain habits, with certain usages and customs, etc. The labor class is a theoretical concept, not a snap-shot photograph kept as a souvenir: it signifies the subject which produces relative and absolute surplus value.[46]

[45] 'What Is Local 2110?,' UAW Local 2110: A Union for Technical, Office, and Professional Workers, accessed February 2, 2017, http://www.2110uaw.org/.
[46] Virno, *Grammar*, 44-45.

Nonetheless, aspects such as the degrees of automatism, repetitiveness, intellectual or manual input, specific internal organisational hierarchies, flexibility, creativity and authorship arguably nuance and potentially segment the different conceptions of the labour class and consequently affect its self-organisation. Therefore, such aspects should be taken into account when addressing labour in its close relation to managerial structures in the workplace, within and beyond the function of unions and ultimately within the theoretical framework of the institution. As I have already hinted, such an examination would side with an inward turn into – as opposed to a withdrawal from – (institutional) structures while promoting an interdisciplinary outreach that intends to identify affinities and common grounds, collectivise anew and hopefully, co-produce significations around what should be just. What we might thus begin to discern is the plausibility of instituent moments within *strategies* that could be seen as introvert in relation to specific (institutional) structures. Even if the instituent does begin with a withdrawal from a specific institution, it institutes something radically new and thereby potentially transforms the initial institution. Instituent praxis does not *have to correspond* to specific institutions, such as an art institution or the institution of marriage, as it operates at the political level of subjectivity and deontology. Yet, it *can* be associated with specific structures, such as the work of unions, art activist projects, strategies of the Left, art institutions, non-governmental organisations or non-profit associations.

In his essay 'Accelerate Management' (2017), Fisher comments insightfully on the relationship between management and labour in the neoliberal era and its political implications. He argues that the 'managerialist imperatives' currently enabled by digital technologies of communication have entered 'consciousness and time' to an unprecedented extent.[47] For instance, working through smartphones in physical isolation diminishes the fertile ground for 'solidarity with others' and shifting the form of tasks from physical to digital

[47] Fisher, 'Accelerate Management,' 17.

often leads to a 'feeling of inundation.'[48] Work on (small) screens combined with ceaseless overflow of demands and information deprive the worker of any 'sense of overview' or 'control.'[49] Due to such conditions, problems of anxiety and distraction are very prominent.[50] Minimised job security and multiplied working hours only serve to decrease workers' efficiency and productivity.[51] Fisher suggests that such managerialist conditions have come to appear as natural to the extent that any 'objection' to them is deemed 'nostalgic.'[52] At the same time, he argues, despite the proclaimed merits of flexibility and market relations over statist bureaucracy, neoliberalism has brought neither sustainable economic efficiency nor actual 'individual freedom,' since workers remain 'subjugated' and isolated within the aforementioned conditions.[53]

However, Fisher stresses that management is not inherently part of this problematic situation that should be rather attributed to management's neoliberal 'takeover' as managerialism or 'new managerialism'.[54] In fact, Fisher contends that a 'communist society' is essentially a 'managed' one and that we should 'reclaim management as a fundamental communist and socialist value.'[55] In more practical terms, Fisher suggests that 'the role of the manager' needs to be re-imagined as someone who would '*protect* us from overwork' and would 'see their role as providing us with a space to think.'[56] He also mentions the figures of Brian Epsteins and Tony Wilson who are iconic cultural managers that discovered, promoted and worked closely with important artists of the 20th century as alternative benchmarks to profit-pursuing figures.[57] In

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 16. For 'new managerialism,' see: Kathleen Lynch, '"New Managerialism" in Education: The Organisational Form of Neoliberalism,' *Open Democracy*, September 16, 2014, accessed June 10, 2016, https://www.opendemocracy.net/kathleen-lynch/%27new-managerialism%27-in-education-organisational-form-of-neoliberalism.
[55] Fisher, 'Accelerate Management,' 20.
[56] Ibid. 21.
[57] Ibid.

conjunction with his aforementioned proposition that the Left needs to be able to manage and control, it could be argued that Fisher's call to an alternative understanding of management that expands from the workplace to the direct political field comes from a politically valuable and strategically radical perspective.

Phillips suggests an investigation into managerial relations in order to move towards political equality organisationally through the workplace. She also claims that desired shifts in the labour conditions and relations of art institutions where she would locate her own activity could then spread in a paradigmatic way to other institutions. Fisher proposes to actively re-imagine such management relations across the board – from (creative) labour to the political activity of the Left. More precisely, he emphasises the need for more management in the political action of the Left *and* a different type of managerialism in the (neoliberal) workplace. Phillips's urge is validly straightforward in upholding the workplace as a starting point and valuable in its mindfulness of implicated power relations. Fisher's proposed scope for a re-imagined application of management is strategically acute and should arguably be pursued. Fisher's account, however, leaves us with an unanswered question: whether the managerial strategy that the Left should employ is of the same kind as the re-imagined role of the (formerly) neoliberal manager.

Fisher's desire to revive the Left's historical ambition to 'construct a managed society' is not simply against the alternative of neo-anarchism and the awkward and sporadic direct action of the Left such as temporary autonomous zones.[58] Rather, it is a forceful projection of robust rationality onto the managerial modality of communism against the chaos or (perceived) randomness that permeates capitalism. Referring to the fiction novel *Red Plenty* (Francis Spufford, 2010) which borrows from the historical moment of the post-Stalinist USSR, Fisher writes: 'The good things produced by

[58] Ibid., 20.

capitalism arise in a haphazard fashion, whereas under communism, they will be delivered in a designed and managed – a rationally-coordinated – way.'[59] Does this rationally-coordinated way then amount to the same type of management towards which the re-imagined manager should be moving through allowing space for thought and preventing overwork? A superficial reading would suggest that the two aspects of management are incompatible in that they reflect the myths of the leftist and the neoliberal, the former being idle and too abstract to achieve concrete change while the latter is the doer and achiever that needs to stop being a workaholic and think more abstractly and in collective terms. This reading would be highly contestable as first and foremost, a line of management that would combine the two aspects is indeed plausible and employed to varying extents both in the neoliberal workplace (mainly through developed schemes of human relations in corporate environments that cater for the life-work balance and the emotional well-being of the workers) as well as within leftist institutional spaces of political action consciously aiming at a non-oppressive work ethos and worker-satisfactory conditions. Even though Fisher might be insinuating a desirable future that is rationally designed and coordinated, while the mode of working towards it and/or in it is one that accommodates deep thinking as well as idling away, he does not outline a potential combination of these two aspects of the vision in a *single* strategy. This seems fairly logical since, on the one hand, he is commenting on the strategies of the Left, which – in contrast to the communism-in-action vision – can arguably be haphazard and chaotic, and, on the other hand, he is trying to distance the neo-liberal manager from the regime of the 'simulation of productivity.' However, his interest in the potentially diverse ways in which management could intimate a non-neoliberal horizon fuels the possibility for combinatory forms between the two aspects of management on a strategic or tactical level.

Such re-imagined managerial relations – including art-institutional ones – as paradigmatic are yet to be confirmed empirically. Documenta 14 (2017) is a

[59] Ibid.

recent art-institutional example of mismanagement that amplifies the hierarchies among directorial boards, funding bodies and high-ranking curatorial staff. By underestimating unforeseen expenses and not sacrificing programming decisions over financial risks, the exhibition ended up with a budget shortfall of 7,6 million euros, financed through loans by the city of Kassel and the State of Hesse (the shareholders of the non-profit company of Documenta).[60] The curatorial team argued that the initial budget was already too low to accommodate a second location for the exhibition and its extended duration, to which the company responded by agreeing to consider a different budget allocation for next editions and new budget control mechanisms. All the while, Documenta 14 attempted to articulate a curatorial critique to its own institutional past and challenge the dominant political dynamics in the German-Greek relations within a European and global context, as discussed in the Introduction. It also developed and implemented arguably one of the most interesting, extensive and thoroughly grass-roots public programming in the history of the institution ('the Parliament of Bodies', run by Paul Preciado). This long-term endeavour was deeply embedded in the local Athenian community and generated action and discourse around locally underdiscussed issues, such as xenophobia, gendered realities and trans emancipation and alternative self-organised digital economies, bringing them also in touch with global discourses and artistic practice.[61] The imprint of this programme that connected thoroughly global forces with local potentialities drew little attention in the (global) media comparing to overarching narratives around neo-colonial art washing or scandal-mongering accusations of misspending and disorganisation. Even though there is no evidence to suggest that the budget shortfalls were in any way connected specifically to the public programme, (on the contrary, they seemed to emerge closer to the exhibition), in hypothetical terms of theory, Fisher's account might be seen as attributing the shortfalls to

[60] Catherine Hickley, 'Documenta Deficit Caused by Athens Overspending Widens to €7.6m in Final Audit,' *The Art Newspaper*, November 30, 2018, accessed January 25, 2019, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/documenta-deficit-caused-by-athens-overspending-widens-to-eur7-6m-in-final-audit.

[61] 'The Pariament of Bodies,' Public Programs, Documenta 14, accessed April 9, 2018, https://www.documenta14.de/en/public-programs/927/the-parliament-of-bodies.

the hopeless politics of grass-roots direct action. However, the latter does not have to be severed from a well-managed and more established institutional setting, at least in the context of a large-scale public programme at the intersection of art and activism. Ironically enough, the accusations of neo-colonialism towards Documenta 14 could be seen as enhanced – if not sparked – by the deteriorated realpolitik context of Greece during the exhibition's preparation years; a context considerably attributable to mismanagement on the part of the Greek radical left government.[62]

In any event, I would argue that the tactical combination of managerial aspects that Fisher places in a single strategy need not remain within the parameters of technical knowhow but be reinstated into a politico-managerial discussion conducive to elucidating matters of the institution. How should we interpret politically and theoretically the potential of the combination of rational co-ordination with the caveats of idleness and deep thought as the tactics that would sustainably make 'good things' happen? What arguably resonates in such a potential is the need for desired emancipatory forces to be designed, planned, and instituted. Such a potential might actually be pointing towards instituent praxis, in that notions of creation and subjectivity have to be taken into account.

Artist Andrea Francke together with administrator and researcher Ross Jardine have further problematised the relation between labour and management by introducing the perspective of the administrator as subject. Francke and Jardine focus on similar issues to the ones raised by Fisher but place emphasis on the effects of administrative labour to the worker as subject. They argue

[62] See Tad Tietze, 'The Failed Strategy,' *Jacobin*, August 10, 2015, accessed September 15, 2017, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/08/syriza-referendum-podemos-austerity/. Tietze writes: 'The Syriza negotiators had completely missed how in a situation of massive disparity in public finances across the eurozone, amid deep economic crisis, the stronger nations would only ever move to greater political convergence on terms that protected their own fiscal integrity.[…] [Alexis] Tsipras and [Yanis] Varoufakis had simply not understood the importance of the *political* dimension to the eurozone crisis. This politics was not one based on "neoliberal ideology," nor the caricatured view of the "ugly German," but on the logic of keeping the single currency together politically, as well as economically.'

that administrative work is largely perceived (mostly by non-administrators) as bureaucratic, repetitive and tedious tasks that are or could be executed automatically merely by aligning to institutional standardisation.[63] However, they maintain that even though such tasks are based on digitally automated systems, templates and platforms that support other types of work, administrative labour entails creative input too which is largely obfuscated.[64] In fact, they contend that even though current copyright law recognises authorship in the creation of new documents or forms, this authorship is mostly ignored as part of clerical work while corporations legally hold copyright ownership of the workers' intellectual product.[65] Thus, administrative work should be equally authored and credited as any other type of authored labour:

> Organisational policies and guidelines make it easier to replace workers who are reduced to cogs in the machine rather than function as individuals with valued knowledge. […] Administrative systems are put in place to pretend that these documents [forms to be completed] are generated through automated technical procedures that erase any trace of humanity or responsibility from them. Documents, forms and templates are constructed on top of each other, each time by a different unnamed worker. Absent from the document is a signature, responsibility but also credit.[66]

They argue that such obfuscation of creative input and the obstruction of authorship results in the workers 'de-subjectification'.[67] It should be noted however that this is not a plea to expand authorship in terms of copyright to be commercially exploited. Rather, Francke and Jardine are proposing the recognition and validation of the creative input of the workers:

> Denying authorship (in the sense of denying the subjectivity expressed in the construction of a form or Excel spread sheet, not in the copyright transforming it into an asset) is, in itself, a process of de-subjectification. It creates a hierarchy of work and

[63] Andrea Francke and Ross Jardine, 'Bureaucracy's Labour: The Administrator as Subject,' in 'Management,' ed. Henric Benesch, Andrea Phillips and Erling Björgvinsson, *Parse Journal*, No. 5 (Spring 2017):24-25.
[64] Francke and Jardine, 'Bureaucracy's Labour,' 25.
[65] Ibid., 27.
[66] Ibid., 25, 28.
[67] Ibid., 28.

> labour, categorising the administrator as maintainer instead of a creator.[68]

Francke and Jardine stress that the denial of authorship is not only a result of technological tools and neoliberal policies. It is also attributed to the hierarchy that is created when residual mass of labour stagnates around heroic individuals or 'deserving subjects' affirming their authored work narrative: 'Hero narratives need to make the support structures around the individual invisible and unnamed in order to construct the myth of meritocracy, talent and authorship – i.e. the deserving subject.'[69] Francke and Jardine regard the figure of the 'creator' or the 'deserving subject' as occupying 'specialised' roles such as those of the 'academic, teacher or artist' and being perceived as possessing both 'natural talent and academic validation.' This way of understanding and distributing authorship, they suggest, allows the subject-creator or 'hero/author' to use 'his' privately-owned authorship to enter the 'public sphere' while 'the mass of unnamed administrators […] are themselves unable to do the same.'[70] In other words, the workers whose authorship is being ignored cannot fulfil their political potential in the sense of their work being visible within a public sphere. The 'administrative subject' is not recognised 'as a full individual' and is excluded 'from the public sphere'.[71] Fulfilling one's political potential becomes a privilege of deserving subjects who can make their 'private ownership/authorship' visible in a public sphere.[72] Thus, the administrator's work becomes the *hidden* infrastructure that only comes to light when it is faulty or absent.[73]

In this respect, the authors draw parallels between administrative and 'domestic' or 'reproductive' labour, which they define as 'the work performed in the private sphere that reproduces the labour power required for capitalism

[68] Ibid., 28.
[69] Ibid., 25-26.
[70] Ibid., 27 [emphasis added].
[71] Ibid., 31.
[72] Ibid., 27.
[73] Ibid., 26-27.

to survive.'[74] They use the example of the white male creative subject who – when working at home – is oblivious to the facilitation he is offered by domestic workers until his work is obstructed by what he understands as nuisances, such as children crying, dinner not being served on time, or someone rearranging his paperwork in order to clean.[75] Thus, the authors maintain that, in a manner similar to administrative labour, domestic labour becomes the unrecognised and hidden infrastructure that serves the deserving subject. Francke and Jardine also refer to Justice for Domestic Workers (J4DW), an association of migrant domestic workers that paradigmatically illuminates exclusion from the 'sphere of public discourse and policymaking'.[76] The workers' visa status and 'processes at immigration control,' including the workers' passports having to be 'in the possession of employers,' forces the workers' full dependence on their employers.[77] At the same time, such workers are typically required to love the family-employer as if it was their own, while 'they should not expect to be loved back.'[78] Conversely, if the family-employer treats the workers as family members, the workers lose their entitlement to minimum wage.[79] Hence, their status as workers prevents their recognition as subjects and perpetuates their invisibility:

> just like the administrator the worker is an infrastructural object that should not be visible. […] A sick domestic worker is a bump on the household's path, unable to undertake the tasks they have been (sub)contracted to perform in order to liberate other individuals to pursue more important, more subjectifying paths.[80]

[74] Ibid., 27.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 30.
[79] Ibid. Francke and Jardine refer here to a study of Einat Albin and Virginia Mantouvalou that reviews an ILO (International Labour Organization) convention on domestic workers. In this specific part of their study, Albin and Mantouvalou refer to the status of domestic workers in the UK. See: Einat Albin and Virginia Mantouvalou, 'The ILO Convention on Domestic Workers: From the Shadows to the Light,' *Industrial Law Journal* 41, No. 1 (2012): 67-78, accessed February 11, 2018, doi: 10.1093/indlaw/dws001.
[80] Francke and Jardine, 'Bureaucracy's Labour,' 30.

Administrative and domestic labour are then socially structured in such a way that the status of the workers deprives them of their status as subjects insofar as they become the invisible infrastructure at the service of deserving subjects.

Even though Francke and Jardine's approach is valuable in its revealing of hidden hierarchies and establishing affinities between specific forms of labour, it becomes problematic if one tries to generalise this perspective into broader conclusions about management and labour through the politics of the instituent. Francke and Jardine's approach seems to be focused on administrators who are ranking relatively low within institutional hierarchies who perform supportive tasks for the visibly creative labour. However, administrators do not only include workers whose labour is unauthored and unrecognised, especially if one considers the vital status of strategic administration within corporations, its centrality as business practice and as core profit activity. Business administration has also been established as a disciplinary field within higher education and academic research since the end of the nineteenth century. The importance of Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees as high-priced training investments among future corporate executives aiming at senior positions is a case in point. Furthermore, the visible creativity not only of visionary managerially pioneering figures such as Steve Jobs, the mastermind behind Apple Inc., but also the incubation sector of product ideas that would fuel the start-up companies of the near future denotes the inextricability of managerial and marketing knowledge and work from a sphere that comprises deserving subjects. In Chapter 4, I discuss further the relation between the public sphere and the market.

Should managerial work relations then be examined solely from the point of view of workers in administrative support (as opposed to management in general) given the extent to which managerialism has infiltrated everyday tasks and the diversity of forms of labour that it permeates and shapes? As the accounts of Fisher, Phillips and Buchloh would indicate, management is multifacetedly related to creative labour. The hierarchy of administrative labour

at the service of creative labour while the creativity of the former remains unauthored and unrecognised is but one version of such a relation.

Moreover, even though the hierarchy created between unauthored and authored work should be addressed, I would argue that the focus on turning the unauthored work into authored should be accompanied by a focus on the equally shifting social status of the authored work. Even though Francke and Jardine are critical towards the private-ownership type of authorship, they do not examine what is perhaps a different kind of de-subjectification of authored work within a broad hierarchical and disciplinary spectrum, in the form of technological automation, standardisation and micro-managerial systematisation. The authors' viewpoint seems valid when applied to the relation between creative or intellectual work and administrative or domestic work. Their argument, however, lacks generalisability when the administrator *is* the deserving subject – whether in the case of the creative or intellectual worker within a neoliberal art or other institution, or the high-ranking executive specialising in corporate strategy. Conversely, the authors' viewpoint also fades when the creative subject does not acquire the status of the deserving subject at all, as, for instance, perspectives on the gendered status of women artists within art historical discourses would suggest. I would argue that Francke and Jardine's approach should be extended to include the relation of bureaucratic infrastructure and technological standardisation to a far broader spectrum of labour positions and relations than the administrator who supports or facilitates creative labour.

Finally, the authors' perspective on de-subjectification by way of not accessing the public sphere through authorship presupposes a definition of the subject in terms that should arguably be contested. The two authors largely ground their thesis on Hannah Arendt's understanding of politics (or action) as enacted in a public sphere historically accessible through ownership of private property and separate from the sphere of labour, which amounts to the necessary work

that maintains action.[81] I would argue that the two spheres are no longer separate and both visibility and invisibility coexist within the two, even if there are specific types of labour that remain invisible.[82] Excluding the case of the migrant domestic workers who are indeed deprived of fundamental political agency, I would contend that the formulation that administrators are being de-subjectified while creative workers – the deserving subjects – can be fulfilled as subjects needs to be further nuanced. The introduction and recognition of authorship within administrative creative product such as forms, documents and templates would not necessarily challenge the contemporary structures of subjectivity, especially if these are understood in the context of the visible hero/author versus the invisible infrastructure. The latter binary formulation would disregard the instituent or at least self-determining potential that could be found in invisibility during an era of overabundance of imagery, voluntary self-exposure and over-surveillance. Relatedly, Larne Abse Gogarty and Ellen Feiss have stressed the issue of 'digital privacy' and its possible associations with 'the interrelated systems of welfare and prison,' wherein 'low-income women [are] monitored by State surveillance practices advanced by innovations in IT and telecommunications.'[83] Furthermore, it is doubtful that the attempt to increase the realm of recognised individual authorship at the expense of procedural standardisation would forestall the possibility that authored and creative human work *in aggregate terms* would be nonetheless depreciated. Arguably, however, the terms of such potential depreciation should be examined from the perspective of technopolitical creation and with regard to the possibility of instituent praxis, rather than a merely technophobic or technologically determinist prism.

In order to proceed with such examination while remaining in proximity to the art institutional realm it is useful to return to the back office of the institution

[81] Ibid., 26-27. Also see: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[82] This is in line with the subjective subsumption of labour under capital, discussed in Chapter 1.
[83] Larne Abse Gogarty and Ellen Feiss, 'Capitalist Life,' in *Re-Materialising Feminism*, ed. Alice Brooke, Giulia Smith and Rózsa Farkas (London: Arcadia Missa Publications, 2015), xl.

and consider some perhaps interrelated ways in which invisibility has been operative in the art world. The project Opacity (2005) curated by Nina Möntmann has explicitly thematised the tension between demands for transparency on the part of 'powerful institutions' and the simultaneous demand for opacity in the context of 'smaller institutions or groups' that permits experimentation with 'new forms of collaboration' and 'an alternative agenda for art institutional work.'[84] This is predominantly a tactical invisibility that would be employed against oppressive or limiting requirements of public or private funding bodies and potentially mass entertainment expectations or standards. The project included art practice that explored the theme of opacity in other ways, such as Kajsa Dahlberg's video *20 Minutes (Female Fist)*, which addressed a lesbian separatist perspective as well as the refusal to be 'represented or defined' in identity-based terms.

Another, more inadvertent invisibility could be associated with what Morgan Quaintance has referred to as the 'UK art world's performance of progression' and its simultaneous underlying 'complicity' with the sustenance of strategic alliances between profit-making art institutions, the management of public resources and corporate sponsorship, which are structurally vested in preserving the status quo and, by extension, the homogeneity of the art world.[85] The UK art world's performed progression claims to be aiming at the 'radical alteration of the field' and its inequalities. However, Quaintance notes that, while the art world often espouses and promotes the spectacularisation of unjustly marginalised or underrepresented subjects, in demographic terms, the traditionally excluded 'people of colour, women and the working class' are only marginally more included, and at the expense of a 'subtle process of enculturation' which often amounts to a 'relinquishment of power.' Quaintance employs examples from established large-scale art institutions in the UK and

[84] Nina Möntmann, 'Opacity: Current Considerations on Art Institutions and the Economy of Desire,' in *Art and Its Institutions*, ed. Nina Möntmann (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 101.
[85] Morgan Quaintance, 'The New Conservatism: Complicity and the UK Art World's Performance of Progression', *e-flux conversations*, October 2017, accessed August 22, 2018, https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/the-new-conservatism-complicity-and-the-uk-art-worlds-performance-of-progression/7200.

financial data of a number of companies to support his argument and I will not delve into these specifics. However, it is important to note that his institutionally critical account is targeted towards an invisible infrastructure, not dissimilarly to earlier forms of Institutional Critique, but in stressing a more blatant antinomy heightened by the performance of progression. Moreover, Quaintance's urge for withdrawal is primarily one of labour and not quite the vague abandonment of undesired institutional structures for non-institutional ones:

> By simply withdrawing their affective labour, their cultural and symbolic capital, their work from circulation within exploitative inter-institutional networks, artists and arts professionals could […] finally torch the tired myth that moral or political compromise is always, at some level, the fundamental structural inevitability of creative practice.

Such withdrawal would not of course be literally simple and would require more than the unionisation of the field and perhaps more than a re-imagined expansion of unionisation itself (as per Fisher). This tension has been thematised by Maria Eichhorn's art project *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* at Chisenhale Gallery in 2016. The project demarcated a specific time frame for the gallery to halt its exhibition activity and remain closed. All staff was essentially on (paid) leave and all emails in the gallery inbox received automated replies and were automatically deleted. At the start of this period, there was a symposium (with an entrance fee) that featured talks by theorists/art-historians/curators who had also contributed essays in the online publication that was made specifically for the project.[86] Stewart Martin has suggested that the 'closed gallery' in this context becomes a 'riposte to the unwaged labour saturating the artworld and the world outside, a plea for this labour to be valued,' as much as a 'more radical plea for the value of not labouring and the waging of producing nothing.'[87] Undoubtedly, there are

[86] A recording of the symposium has been available online since the beginning of this non-exhibition.
[87] Stewart Martin, 'A Gallery Closed in Spring: on Maria Eichhorn's *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours*,' in *Maria Eichhorn:* 5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours, ed. Katie Guggenheim and Polly Staple (London: Chisenhale Gallery, 2016), accessed July 11, 2017, https://chisenhale.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Maria-Eichhorn_5-weeks-25-days-175-hours_Chisenhale-Gallery_2016.pdf, 58.

questions even at the level of the symbolic function of this artwork regarding the reproduction of hierarchies between wage labour and volunteering work (which Chisenhale involves occasionally for events) as well as employment on zero-hour contracts or on a freelance basis (for instance, technicians), especially considering that payment was sustained only for the eight members of staff who were permanently contracted.[88] Martin incisively suggests that the 'spell of wage remains binding' and 'that the gallery is not turned into an autonomous workplace, but an automated one.'[89] As Martin implies, such automation is merely hinted at by the technologically automated functions that sustain some operation in the gallery; more to the point is the wage condition that does not turn the gallery into 'common property but common expropriation.'[90] Josefine Wikström has observed that 'the financial base of the exhibition is [...] still highly productive,' since 'the private funders that Chisenhale depends on – among them, the multi-national media corporation Bloomberg and Frieze Art Fair – are not affected by the gallery shutdown.'[91]

Algorithmic institutions and big data monopolies

Scholar of Strategic Management Education Stefano Harney has used the term 'algorithmic institutions' to describe the advent of what he calls 'logistical capitalism' which heralds the pervasiveness of algorithmic decision-making at the core of strategising and policy planning from strictly business to all public and private institutions.[92] Harney argues that all bureaucracy today is 'privately administered' irrespectively of whether it is funded privately or publicly and it is '*run by*' algorithmic tools.[93] Such tools are programmed to be aligned with

[88] Claire Voon, 'For Its Newest Exhibition, a Gallery Is Closed for a Month,' *Hyperallergic*, May 5, 2016, accessed July 11, 2017, https://hyperallergic.com/294353/for-its-newest-exhibition-a-gallery-is-closed-for-a-month/.
[89] Martin, 'Gallery Closed,' 58.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Josefine Wilkström, 'A Not Radical Enough Gesture,' *Kunstkritikk*, May 26, 2016, accessed July 11, 2017, https://kunstkritikk.com/a-not-radical-enough-gesture/.
[92] Stefano Harney, 'The New Rules of Algorithmic Institutions,' in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 453.
[93] Harney, 'Algorithmic Institutions,' 448 [emphasis in original].

‘good business climate’ and the constant generation of new markets through privatisation: ‘Algorithms never rest. They evolve to create more intense and extensive markets.’[94] Harney suggests that privatisation has largely gained ethical legitimacy through its proclaimed eradication of corruption and power hierarchies or pathologies traditionally associated with State bureaucracy.[95] Even though, he argues, government services would theoretically ‘benefit from competition as if there were a market’, the reality of privatising a government service can be very different since it is initially there so that it is accessible by everyone.[96] Regardless of the advantages and disadvantages in the quality of service or its accessibility, Harney contends that privately administered services or the ‘private bureaucrats’ or ‘administrators’ have come to serve an algorithmic logic which is only interested in turning ‘publics’ into ‘markets’ and expanding them.[97]

> Producing markets means producing more forms of monopoly over more aspects of the production of life, or to put it in more traditional critical language, the expansion and intensification of social production for private gain. Privatisation uses the algorithm to generate monopoly power in a world where some are said to be in need of market discipline, incentives, or entrepreneurship, and others are ready to give it to them.[98]

Harney suggests that institutions are no longer run according to rules that reflect their own logic as institutions. Rather, ‘the rules now are algorithmic’ which means that it is algorithms that make the rules by which either ‘nominally public’ or private institutions are run.[99] Thus, even though there is still human leadership, actual ‘authority’ lies with the algorithm that always echoes the pervasive privately administered logic of ‘the accumulation of bodies and things for surplus profit and monopoly’.[100] Harney also argues that we are privatising ‘ourselves’ too by adjusting ourselves so as to ‘serve’ the algorithm

[94] Ibid., 449-50.
[95] Ibid., 448.
[96] Ibid., 449.
[97] Ibid., 449-50.
[98] Ibid., 450.
[99] Ibid., 453, 456.
[100] Ibid., 456.

rather than the other way around and we feel the 'compulsion to privatize any person or thing refusing improvement, resisting the algorithm.'[101] Harney asserts that 'many of us become the private bureaucrats' in that 'we administer the privatization.' Even though he does not disclose who 'we' are, the fact that his essay is written for the Former West research project does not at the very least exclude the possibility that he is referring to an art-related audience.[102] After elaborating on the privatisation of 'ourselves,' Harney proceeds by focusing on the exemplary category of a 'museum of contemporary art in a European capital.' He considers this category suggestive of his broader thesis regarding the algorithmic institutions and the privatisation of the self through them.[103] He describes the gradual process of the non-specific museum's shift into a fully privately administered institution: from the initial realisation that it needs to keep up with the contemporary reality of marketed cultural services to the core restructuring of its management staff and employment of advisory private company KPMG.[104] Run on an algorithmically-based 'enterprise planning system,' the art institution outsources activities, such as its café, and begins to manage and invest its property assets.[105] The museum can now access loans in order to extend its infrastructure, such as a 'new education and outreach wing including a members' private rooftop lounge [that] will also attract corporate funding and gifts from private donors, with consultants hired to shape a culture of giving – consultants recommended by KPMG.'[106] The algorithm brings efficiency and helps the art institution fundraise and manage its assets to the extent that 40 percent decrease on its government/public funding does not affect it financially.[107] Due to such shifts some workers have been sacked or pressured into early retirement.[108] Workers have also had to

[101] Ibid., 450.
[102] I discuss the research project Former West in Chapter 4.
[103] Harney, 'Algorithmic Institutions,' 450.
[104] Ibid., 450-453.
[105] Ibid., 451-52.
[106] Ibid., 452-53.
[107] Ibid., 452.
[108] Ibid., 451.

adjust to the new administrative/managerial mentality and ethos of work assessment with a huge emphasis on self-assessment.[109]

More broadly, what Harney describes as the privatisation of ourselves, our adjusting of ourselves to serve the algorithm while submitting to a monopolistic logic and economy becomes blatantly evident through what Nick Srnicek calls 'platform monopolies' such as Facebook.[110] Srnicek has coined the term 'platform capitalism' to describe the centrality of the business model of the platform within today's global capitalism.[111] He defines the platform as the 'infrastructure that connects two or more groups and enables them to interact' and considers companies such as Facebook, Google and Amazon to be run essentially as platforms.[112] Each interaction on a platform is translatable into data – the raw material for algorithms.[113] As Srnicek observes, the model of the platform does not only implicate 'tech-sector' companies:

> Uber is the most prominent example, turning the staid business of taxis into a trendy platform business. Siemens and GE, two powerhouses of the 20th century, are fighting it out to develop a cloud-based system for manufacturing. Monsanto and John Deere, two established agricultural companies, are trying to figure out how to incorporate platforms into farming and food production.[114]

Srnicek also suggests that platform companies operate in a monopolistic logic not simply by precluding any direct competition, but also through relentlessly accumulating user data, rendering older major industry stakeholders such as newspaper or advertisement agencies and old department stores redundant, and absorbing smaller companies such as Instagram and Whatsapp.[115]

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[109] Ibid., 452.
[110] Nick Srnicek, 'We Need to Nationalise Google, Facebook and Amazon: Here's Why,' *The Guardian*, August 30, 2017, accessed March 2, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/30/nationalise-google-facebook-amazon-data-monopoly-platform-public-interest.
[111] Ibid. Also see: Nick Srnicek. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
[112] Srnicek, 'Need to Nationalise.'
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

Referring to social media platform Facebook and its competitor Ello, which briefly tried to be Facebook's ad-free alternative that would not sell user data to third parties nor require the user's real names, Srnicek writes:

> Reaching a critical mass of users is what makes these businesses successful: the more users, the more useful to users – and the more entrenched – they become. Ello's rapid downfall occurred because it never reached the critical mass of users required to prompt an exodus from Facebook – whose dominance means that even if you're frustrated by its advertising and tracking of your data, it's still likely to be your first choice because that's where everyone is, and that's the point of a social network.[116]

Srnicek asserts that data are 'the 21st century version of oil' in terms of their current importance to the global economy.[117] Heavy investment into Artificial Intelligence or 'machine learning' by the aforementioned companies testifies to the significance of extracting data in a circular pattern by which the increase of extracted data optimises machine learning and improved machine learning expands the extraction of data.[118] The monopolist power that such companies maintain combined with the momentousness of data as an economic resource lead Srnicek to the daring proposition that Facebook, Google and Amazon should be nationalised. He regards these companies as fit for 'public ownership' along the lines of 'natural monopolies like utilities and railways that enjoy huge economies of scale and serve the common good.'[119] Srnicek also maintains that potential state efforts to regulate such companies would ultimately be insufficient if the aim is to take 'back control over the internet and our digital infrastructure, instead of allowing them to be run in the pursuit of profit and power.'[120]

Srnicek's proposition resonates with Fisher's urge for the Left to manage and control things as well as Mouffe's call to not abandon state institutions. On the

[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.

other hand, Harney has warned of the privately administered logic that has infiltrated through the algorithm deep within public administration and bureaucracy too. It is indeed hard to imagine such companies striped of their privately administered logic due to their nationalisation. I would argue that the nationalisation of such companies would de facto constitute a step towards the 'common good' or at least a step away from the 'pursuit of profit and power' due to the sheer economic fact of their public ownership. However, much like the nominally public art institutions, such ownership might no longer necessarily entail their public character in the service itself and the monopolist nature of such a defining to subjectivity infrastructure would remain an issue. Has then the infrastructure once developed to serve the subject – or the post-Fordist subject – come to define it and control it in a monopoly that precludes imagining alternative futures? How definitive is Harney's assertion that authority now lies with the algorithm? Rather than formulate definite answers to such questions I will use them as a backdrop and reframe them in order to further examine the relationship between the subject and infrastructure and inevitably the institution.

#Institution/ #Infrastructure/ #subjectivity+affect

To this end, I will discuss the hypothesis that a focus on the instituent should be dropped in the prospect of the urgency of analysing material and immaterial, human and technological infrastructure and its significance. Cultural theorist Marina Vishmidt draws a distinction between Institutional Critique and Infrastructural Critique in the field of art and traces the premises of an alleged shift from the former to the latter.[121] Even though in historiographical terms she considers the critique of infrastructures to have been part of the critique of institutions in art practice, she currently identifies an emphasis on the former aspect – the infrastructural.[122] For Vishmidt, what has often been discussed in

[121] Marina Vishmidt, 'Between Not Everything and Not Nothing: Cuts Toward Infrastructural Critique,' in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh, 265-69 (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).
[122] Vishmidt, 'Between Not Everything,' 266-67.

art historical discourse as Institutional Critique operates by 'defining and tracing boundaries of that which is legitimately subject to critique in terms of the implicated subject of knowledge', whereas Infrastructural Critique 'highlights structural conditions for the possibility of critique and for its objects alike […] often at odds with institutional reckoning as a relevant sphere of activity.'[123] Infrastructural Critique would then consist in

> […] the engagement with the thoroughly intertwined objective (historical, socio-economic) and subjective (including affect and artistic subjectivization) conditions necessary for the institution and its critique to exist, reproduce themselves, and posit themselves as an immanent horizon as well as transcendental condition. These conditions include local and global labor markets, corporate power, property development, inasmuch as they manifest the structural violence of capitalism, racism, and gender, which is so often mediated by the reckless expansionism of art markets and spaces.[124]

I would contest that Institutional Critique did not engage with such conditions, since so much of it has been self-reflexive and self-critical precisely to implicate the conditions that allow the critique to take place and conversely, so much of it went beyond demarcating what is legitimately subject to critique in terms of the subject of knowledge. I will elaborate on this thesis through art-practice examples that will lead me to a rearticulating of the relationship between institution and infrastructure and the corresponding pertinence of the subject.

The first example is the work of the art group BMPT mentioned in Chapter 1. BMPT's serialised mug shots for the Paris Biennale poster (1967) expose the visual, linguistic and cognitive conventions of language and institutional power *as already implicated within* economic investment. Buchloh's very central thesis upholds the mimesis of the operating logic of late capitalism as a *condition* for the critique to be performed by conceptual art. Even in more recent artistic examples, such as Byford's *The Social Mining Union*, where the artist operates more as an explorer (or a miner) than a critic into a given

[123] Ibid., 267.
[124] Ibid.

infrastructure, I would argue that institutional power and its relation to subjectivity and regimes of knowledge are laterally implicated regardless of the artist's intentions to critique or address them. Byford's work significantly depends on documenting, archiving and showcasing how Glencore operates, from the perspective of a white male western art-school graduate who has mined into the company in order to confront older white male shareholders. Therefore, on one hand, following Vishmidt's logic, his practice could indeed be seen as diverging from Institutional Critique's usual suspects and corporate pranksters the YesMen, for instance.[125] Byford's practice gravitates more to researching and portraying the implicating infrastructure than deliberating a critical joke. This becomes clear in his documentation of the purchased Glencore share [fig 2] and the exchanged scrap metal [fig 3] as well as a short video compilation of Google maps satellite close-up shots of Glencore's premises [fig 4]. On the other hand, Byford's practice displays strong ties with the methodologies of Institutional Critique of the second half of the twentieth century. His consideration of the positionality of the implicated subjects of knowledge could be evidenced in his snapshot [fig 5], which depicts the shareholders engaging in discourse and is taken by the artist (himself) having infiltrated Glencore's headquarters. More broadly, as I will further discuss in Chapter 6, mocking practices can and do operate at the level of infiltration and portrayal of implicated (institutional) infrastructures.

Thus, art practice hints that critical approaches of institutions and infrastructure tend to refer to both the conditions for the critique as well as the implicated subject(s) of knowledge. I would argue – perhaps against Vishmidt's observations – that categorising institutional and infrastructural critique separately as the former simply demarcating the (legitimate) area of critique and the implicated subject of knowledge and the latter delving deep into the critique's underlying (objective) conditions would oversimplify the complexities of art practice and theoretical definitions alike. As far as the theoretical aspect

[125] The YesMen are a US-based collective that has been active since 1996. Its practice involves humour and pranks often targeting corporate environments, figures and policies in order to draw attention to the corporate and neoliberal conditioning of society.

is concerned, Vishmidt understands infrastructure as a type of repetitive reproduction or 'the material guarantee of a movement's persistence in time, the durable pathways and affordances for development, crystallization, and reconfiguring.'[126] This reproduction is simultaneously open to interruption and difference:

> This reproductive aspect of infrastructure, however, has to retain an openness to the 'temporal cut,' which undoes crystallizations and institutions in the attempt to realize the desires that were the initial impetus for their establishment, and which this establishment tends to block over time as they are subordinated to the survival of the institution. Infrastructure might be that which repeats, but this repetition is not without difference: it can monotonously produce the same differences (such as infrastructures that reproduce social inequalities), but it can also be a means of ensuring the reproduction of a wholly different form of social life over time.[127]

Vishmidt's understanding of the institution seems rather limiting here and the instituent moment is ignored or, at any rate, not associated with the 'temporal cut' and the moment when repetition breaks. Moreover, even though Vishmidt's account regards desire as the initial impetus for infrastructure's establishment, it does not adequately address how this impetus operates and the implication of subjectivity thereof. Her implication of the subject as the subjective branch of the necessary conditions for the critique to exist (the other branch being the objective) elaborated as affective and pertaining to artistic subjectivisation does not do justice to the affective, non-linear and asignificatory production of subjectivity that her terminology could be assumed to belie.

By contrast, Irit Rogoff's understanding of infrastructure outlines its connection to knowledge and its 'affective surplus' in a Guattarian take:

> The process by which knowledge assumes a-significatory forms is one that destabilises its relation to other fixed knowledges and acquired an affective surplus. And one of the things that I am

[126] Vishmidt, 'Between Not Everything,' 268.
[127] Ibid.

> interested in is the possibility of thinking affective surplus in relation to infrastructure. […] When we in the West, or in the industrialized, technologized countries, congratulate ourselves on having an infrastructure—properly working institutions, systems of classification and categorization, archives and traditions and professional training for these, funding pathways, educational pathways, excellence criteria, impartial juries, and properly air conditioned auditoria with well-stocked cafes, etc.—we forget the degree to which these have become protocols that bind and confine us in their demand to be conserved or conversely, in their demand to be resisted. […] What if however, the concept of infrastructure was thought against the grain of inclusion, enablement and achievement and became the site of a critical investigation of the frictions that take place between expression and organisation.[128]

Rogoff understanding of infrastructure should be seen as distinct from Vishmidt's pattern of reproduction and (material) crystallisation interrupted by temporal cuts. Such pattern would resonate with, rather than dislocate, the confinement enacted in the very dilemma of conserving or resisting protocols. Theorising infrastructure against the grain of inclusion, enablement and achievement would amount to destabilising its relation to fixed knowledge and moving towards what Rogoff calls 'a-significatory' forms that make room for the 'affective surplus'. In other words, Rogoff is making an epistemological statement that seeks to diffuse the (initial) affective impetus into the entire concept and reality of infrastructure. This statement could be seen as challenging a focus on the reproduction of conditions (and their temporal interruption) registered either positively as enabling or antithetically as disabling and leaving no room for intervention in the artifice of the real.

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[128] Irit Rogoff, 'Infrastructure' (Keynote lecture at *Former West: Documents, Constellations, Prospects*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, March 18-24, 2013, accessed November 5, 2017, https://formerwest.org/DocumentsConstellationsProspects/Contributions/Infrastructure).
Brian Massumi suggests that neither affect nor affection denote 'a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). *L 'affect* [([Baruch] Spinoza's affectus)] is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* [(Spinoza's affectio)] is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies).' Brian Massumi, 'Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements,' in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvi.

Furthermore, in allowing a critical navigation into the frictions between expression and organisation, infrastructure could become a site for the aforementioned complex entanglements between creative and administrative labour – rather than the exclusive site for managerial and administrative enablement. Seen in this light, infrastructure becomes a pertinent indexical category to all the aforementioned examples including art practices, strategies and tactics, trade unions, corporations and art institutions.

Most importantly, placing knowledge as a-signification and affect at the core of the concept of infrastructure shrinks the gap between institution and infrastructure. Albeit different, the two concepts operate in parallel and in close proximity. What I have previously described as the inward moment of institution could be understood as infrastructure, either in the sense of reproduction and material guarantee with interruptions (Vishmidt) or affective surplus against enablement and achievement (Rogoff). In both understandings, the material guarantee of an enabling structure is regarded as the primary modality of infrastructure, regardless of its initial impetus or temporal interruption and despite any advocated contamination with a-signification. I argue that institution (as the process of institution) exceeds both understandings of infrastructure, if it is granted that the focus is placed on the instituent moment as simultaneously one of affect *and* the co-production of rules – translating into both corporeal and incorporeal universes within assemblages. The co-existence of affect and rule-inventing in the same moment and without requiring the presence of the repetitive reproductive aspect is only locatable in instituent praxis, regardless of how infrastructure is conceived. Schematically put, the process of institution as instituent praxis includes and exceeds infrastructure through both the instituent moment (the creation of new significations/rules through affect) *and* the continuity/inertia of the already instituted. The latter does not simply reproduce, enable or affirm but, rather, constitutes the instituted that will condition instituent praxis.

#Instituent / #code / #desiring_machines

Where does this leave the predicament designated by Harney's algorithmic institutions and the dystopia of big data monopolies? Rogoff has hinted that 'within infrastructure there is a kind of rubbing together of things that contaminate one another and can't be separated easily into strands that can be named acceptable progressive practice and unacceptable regressive technocratic practice.'[129] It is doubtful, however, that even an affective understanding of infrastructure would associate its conceptual core with issues of acceptability (moral or political) which would rather pertain to a neighbouring yet distinct discourse – the instituent. In this respect, Vishmidt's observation that difference within infrastructure can be understood either as social inequality or, conversely, as different forms of social life – other than the dominant capitalist ones, is astute. Nonetheless, the pertinence of the instituent is neither quite judiciary nor legislative, since that would defy the very concept of the instituent as praxis and not power. In order to examine such pertinence, one must begin with the oppositional dichotomy between technocratic and human agency often translating as automated technological infrastructure versus subjective free will.

Theorist Wendy Chun has commented on this dichotomy situating its epicentre on the 'code as law as police':

> Celebrations of an all-powerful user/agent – 'you' as the network, 'you' as producer – counteract concerns over code as law as police by positing 'you' as the sovereign subject, 'you' as the decider. An agent, however, is one who does the actual labor, hence an agent as one who acts on behalf of another. On networks, the agent would seem to be technology rather than the users or programmers who authorize actions through their commands and clicks. Programmers and users are not creators of languages, nor the actual executors, but rather living sources who take credit for the action.[130]

[129] Rogoff, 'Infrastructure.'

[130] Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, 'Crisis, Crisis, Crisis, or Sovereignty and Networks,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 28, no. 6 (2011):102, accessed March 7, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411418490.

Chun is alluding to the concentration of power – executive, legislative and juridical – that lies with the code when it functions as law and simultaneously as policing. While the code pretends to accommodate human agency through the permitted decision-making and choosing among various clicks and commands, the subject is stripped of agency since the actual labour is performed by technology. Various takes on techno-capitalism reinforce this critique. The danger is that techno-capitalism – following the steps of neoliberalism – seems the only possible horizon and is thereby naturalised. This standpoint, also bordering Harney's algorithmic institutional reality, should direct us towards the centrality of law and rule-making in a horizon of algorithmic governance or code as law. Harney indeed sees potential in the realisation that humans need to reclaim rule-making from the algorithm.[131] However, despite the subjective/institutional internalisation of technological/algorithmic imperatives and the insight that economic and political decision-making has been unprecedently conferred to the algorithmic apparatus, the latter *ultimately* rests on and *serves* an (abstract and concrete) institutional system that is sustained, if not controlled, by human relations. As software engineer François Chollet has argued, dystopian scenarios about the 'singularisation' of artificial intelligence and the takeover of technical machines that would *infinitely sustain* a profit-based administrative apparatus beyond any human agency are 'pure fantasy.'[132] He is concerned, however, about such apparatus having the capacity to use technical machines in a psychologically manipulative fashion to influence consumers' behaviour as much as decidedly divert, condition and drive political change or action.[133]

This line of thinking brings us back to instituent praxis, whose logic of artificiality and the making of transversal subjectivity through the production of new significations as rules begins to portray the disorientation and unworkability of issues when posed as hierarchies of dual competition: human-

[131] Harney, 'Algorithmic Institutions,' 456.
[132] François Chollet, *Deep Learning with Python* (Shelter Island, NY: Manning, 2018), 335-36.
[133] François Chollet, 'What Worries Me About AI,' *Medium*, March 28, 2018, accessed February 10, 2019, https://medium.com/@francois.chollet/what-worries-me-about-ai-ed9df072b704.

technology, human-machine or human-software. The quest for thought around the instituent could be insightful with regard to the conditions under which code as law operates not as police but as conscious co-institution of rules. Guattari was already in the 1960s exploring the conditions in which bureaucracy could function as institutional creativity away from individual oppression.[134] Dardot and Laval have rearticulated the conceptual backdrop of this possibility in relation to the code in language and psychoanalysis, the subject group and instituent praxis.

Rule-making, not as officially legislating but as coming up with the enunciation that makes the group consciously seize the meaning of its own praxis and relate anew with the internal code of its unconscious, precisely and crucially implicate the psychoanalytical angle that points to desire and its pathic, pre-personal, proto-subjective and machinic configurations. This is in tandem with the conceptual constellation of instituent praxis pointing towards conscious re-inventions away from spontaneity. What Dardot and Laval, examined in Chapter 2, refer to only implicitly through their employment of Guattarian transversality and their reconfigurations around the unconscious is desire. It is worth noting that, apart from his urges to reclaim management, Fisher has argued that a struggle that would imagine beyond a neoliberal reality needs to be libidinal and therefore rescue and re-channel *desire* which has been captured and monopolised by 'Post-Fordist capitalism and neoliberalism'.[135] At the same time, the agents of such desire should be seen in the conceptual framework of Guattari's 'desiring machines,' rather than through ideologically constructed bourgeois conceptions of soul or as individual desiring that linearly responds to a pre-existing lack:

> For Gilles Deleuze and me desire is everything that exists before the opposition between subject and object, before representation and production. It's everything whereby the world and affects

[134] Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, 62. The particular book section ('Introduction to Institutional Psychotherapy') that I am citing from is an excerpt of an oral presentation to the Working Group on Institutional Psychology and Sociology (GTPSI), which took place in the early 1960s.
[135] Fisher, 'Indirect Action,' 110.

> constitute us outside of ourselves, in spite of ourselves. It's everything that overflows from us. That's why we define it as flow (flux). Within this context we were led to forge a new notion in order to specify in what way this kind of desire is not some sort of undifferentiated magma, and thereby dangerous, suspicious, or incestuous. So we speak of machines, of 'desiring machines', in order to indicate that there is as yet no question here of 'structure', that is, of any subjective position, objective redundancy, or coordinates of reference. Machines arrange and connect flows. They do not recognize distinctions between persons, organs, material flows, and semiotic flows.[136]

The contribution of instituent praxis amounts to upholding the importance of the complex that brings together desire and the invention of rules of law as new significations with the caveat of a-significatory and subjectivity-producing elements. The currency of what has been called political correctness from the realms of art production and culture industry to bureaucratic policy that constantly seeks to condition what should be allowed or what should be acceptable points to this importance. Even artistic or other creation that deliberately dissociates itself from an ethically correct framework is still implicated by negation within the aforementioned complex. The expanded practice of intellectual property law also points to this complex. The implementation of the GDPR framework on a European basis and broader legal and institutional battles within platform and data economy indicate that the channeling of legitimisation in the management of desire is the crux of today's capitalism, but at the moment it remains subservient to profit-based incentives that created the dominant managerial templates in the first place and at the mercy of a belated institutional intervention that rests on the implementation of a liberal understanding of individual consent.[137] Creation should be measured against the complex of instituent praxis and to the extent

[136] Félix Guattari, 'A Liberation of Desire: An Interview by George Stambolian,' in *The Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 205.

[137] For more context see: Russel Brandom, 'Facebook and Google hit with $8.8 billion in lawsuits on day one of GDPR,' *The Verge*, May 25, 2018, accessed August 23, 2018, https://www.theverge.com/2018/5/25/17393766/facebook-google-gdpr-lawsuit-max-schrems-europe.

that it goes beyond legal adjustments that remain within the neoliberal or even capitalist status quo.

Illustrations

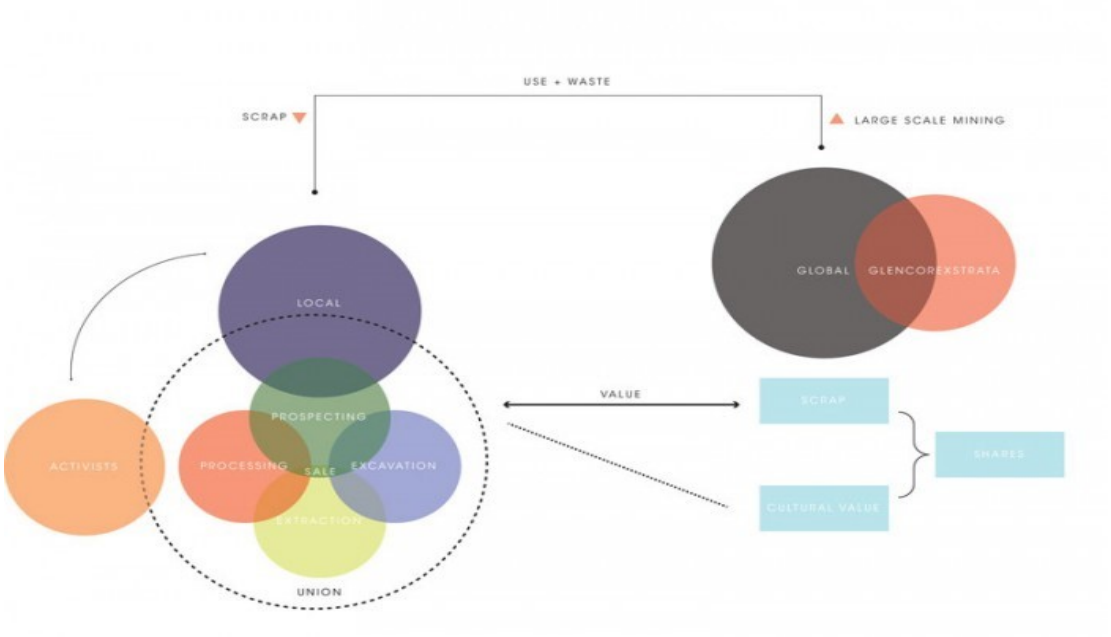
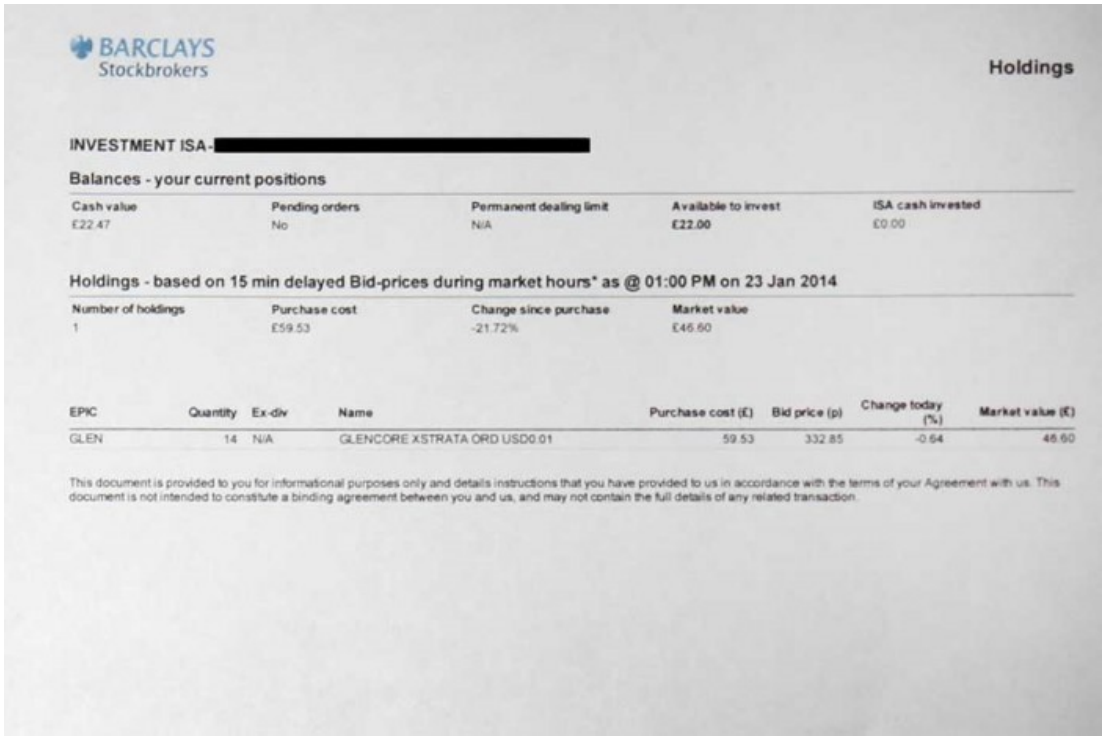


Fig. 1: Tee Byford, *The Social Mining Union* (untitled document #1), 2014, accessed November 18, 2017, http://www.tearlach.co.uk/index.php/art-work/the-social-mining-union/.



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EPIC	Quantity	Ex-div	Name	Purchase cost (£)	Bid price (p)	Change today (%)	Market value (£)
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Fig. 2: Tee Byford, *The Social Mining Union* (untitled document #2), 2014, accessed November 18, 2017, http://www.tearlach.co.uk/index.php/art-work/the-social-mining-union/.

Fig. 3: Tee Byford, *The Social Mining Union* (untitled document #3), 2014, accessed November 18, 2017, http://www.tearlach.co.uk/index.php/art-work/the-social-mining-union/.

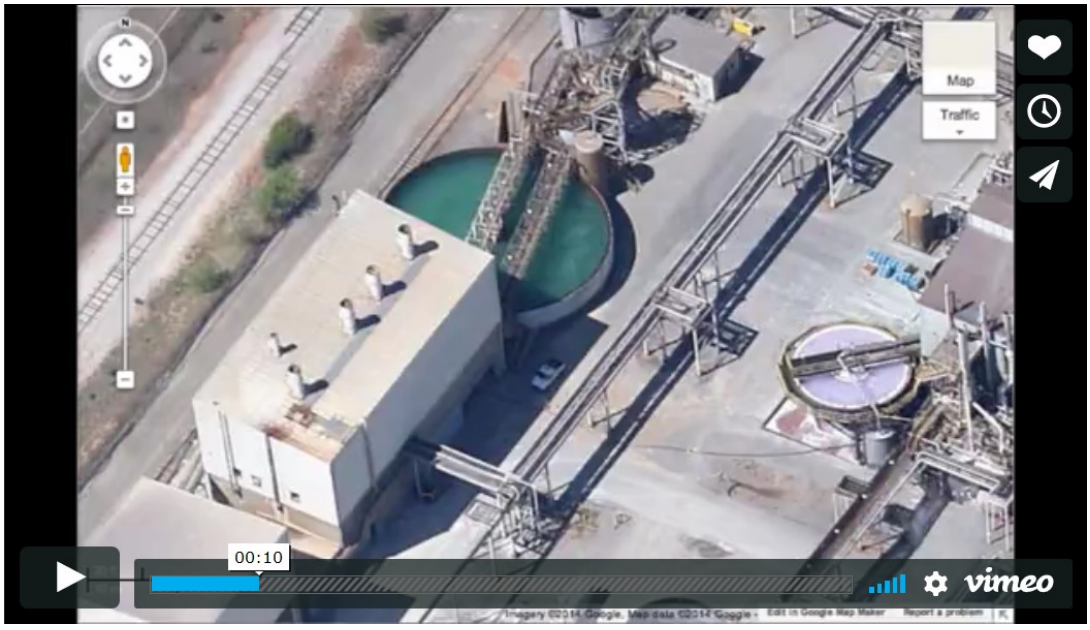

Fig. 4: Tee Byford, *The Social Mining Union* (*Glencore Mining Sites and Properties,* video still), 2014, accessed November 18, 2017, http://www.tearlach.co.uk/index.php/art-work/the-social-mining-union/.

Fig. 5: Tee Byford, *The Social Mining Union* (untitled document #4), 2014, accessed November 18, 2017, http://www.tearlach.co.uk/index.php/art-work/the-social-mining-union/.

4. Instituent Praxis and Discursive Practices

The discursive in context

In the 1990s, the institutions and curatorial structures of the art world shifted towards a discursive and pedagogical function. By this, I mean to point towards the proliferation of participatory, educational and discursive events and formats such as symposia, publications, workshops, reading groups etc both as independent parts of art-institutional programming and in accompaniment of exhibitionary display structures. The emergence or at least the amplification and establishment of a discursive pedagogical paradigm was due to several factors, including the expansion (in size and scope) of the curatorial field per se as well as the proliferation and diversification of art institutions. The oft-cited 'educational turn' is emblematic of this shift to the discursive, albeit not technically identical. *Curating and the Educational Turn*, Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson pinpoint a shift whereby 'discussions, talks, symposia, education programmes, debates and discursive practices' are no longer mere supplements of exhibitions but 'have become central to contemporary practice; they have now become the main event.'[1]

The practices of the so-called 'educational turn' are often conflictive and substantially variable in form, content, and aspirations. They range from public engagement programming and education departments in museums or other public or private institutions to small-scale independent curatorial projects that adopt the educative process as their main methodology. Also prominent in the volume and in further recent bibliographies on art and pedagogy are self-organized practices that aspire to activism—often in relation to legal frameworks for higher education such as the Bologna process, which is a

[1] Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, introduction to *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 12. O'Neill and Wilson differentiate between the educational and the discursive turn in curating despite their obvious overlaps.

series of agreements between European countries aiming at comparability in the standards of higher education.[2] O'Neill and Wilson consider the discursive element to be the most critical 'line of analysis' of the various educational/curatorial paths in or around the art world.[3] The authors' distinction between the educational and the discursive is sound at least at a practical level; not all education departments or educational programming within art institutions are necessarily predominantly discourse-based and not all aspects of art education rely on discursive formats. In this chapter, I will mainly refer to discursive practices and projects as well as the discursive-in-general which Simon Sheikh understands as a mode of addressing a public on behalf of an (art) institution and thus, in such context, it would always retain its relation to the educational and the pedagogical.[4]

In previous chapters, discursivity has also been implicitly pertinent through the notions of signification and enunciation within the conceptual remit of instituent praxis. Even though Guattari aims at the theorisation of the enunciative as the non-discursive and the a-significational toward which Dardot and Laval's instituent praxis could arguably be geared, I will attempt a strategic reconciliation of instituent praxis with discursivity in its Foucauldian vein, i.e. its enunciative vein. Such reconciliation consolidates the relation between Dardot and Laval's definition of instituent praxis (i.e. the co-creation of new significations as rules of law) with its psychoanalytic and pathic element, albeit within the discursive. This relation also takes a critical distance from utopian notions of abolition of discourse. Foucault's views are insightful.

> [D]iscourse is really only an activity, of writing in the first case, of reading in the second and exchange in the third. This exchange, this writing, this reading never involve anything but signs. Discourse thus nullifies itself, in reality, in placing itself at the disposal of the signifier.[5]

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[2]This process started with the Bologna Declaration in 1999.

[3] O'Neill and Wilson, introduction, 16.

[4] Simon Sheikh, 'Letter to Jane (Investigation of a Function),' in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 69.

[5] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 228.

Foucault also comments incisively on the bipolarity – at least in western knowledge contexts – consisting in the 'supremacy' of discourse in general or 'logophilia' and the lurking radical fear around it or 'profound logophobia:'

> It is as though these taboos, these barriers, thresholds and limits were deliberately disposed in order, at least partly, to master and control the great proliferation of discourse, in such a way as to relieve its richness of its most dangerous elements; to organise its disorder so as to skate round its most uncontrollable aspects.[6]

In order to analyse this fear, Foucault suggests a turn to three functions that would radically break from the 'current thinking' on discourse: 'to question our will to truth; to restore to discourse its character as an event; to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier.'[7]

Here, the notion of power in Foucault emerges as key, in its persistent governing and dispersed quality that extends to the very limits of discourse. Power regulates the regimes of truth and edifices of knowledge, which are seen as substantiated by signs, meaning and the governing relations that connect them. The sovereignty of the signifier describes and prescribes the power relation between signifier and signified, in that the former has primacy over the latter. The macro-scale of this condition takes the form of the 'supremacy' of discourse, as the latter is placed 'at the disposal of the signifier.' For Foucault, questioning our will to truth, restoring discourse as an event and abolishing the sovereignty of the signifier would mean a shift in established and reigning power relations. It is important to note that this would be a *shift* in power rather than its abolition. Such a shift might, however, be closely related to a challenging of the insistence of power over the actually 'uncontrollable' potential of discourse, as aspects of the psyche would come to the fore and reveal themselves as irreducibly active in the discourse. In other words, as Foucault's references to logophilia and logophobia might suggest, fear or desire cannot be absent from an assessment of the pervasiveness of power – whether in discourse or elsewhere. Yet, albeit challenged, power (in its fluidity)

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[6] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 228-29.
[7] Ibid., 229.

cannot be extinct from the quest towards instituent praxis, which crucially merges the psyche and the production of subjectivity with decisions around what *should* be just.

Therefore, even though Guattari's thinking of the proto-subjective, pathic, machinic and a-significational seeks and points to non-discursive modes, the discursive as such or power cannot be eradicated from the production of speaking subjects. However, Foucault's pertinence of power in discourse could be understood in a post-structural framework that seeks to thwart the sovereignty of the signifier. This relation fundamentally involves fear, 'desire' and the psyche, not least as they manifest in discursive 'exclusion' and 'prohibition'.[8]

Once again, I will not seek to locate actualisations or implementations of instituent praxis; rather, I will speculate on mappings and articulations of potential terrains for instituent praxis. I will examine possible insights the theory of instituent praxis could offer in relation to the discursive conditions in the contemporary art world (and elsewhere). In this, I will problematise the reduction of the discursive to dialogical or communicational formats and models (without in the least diminishing the importance of such formats and models and without neglecting the theoretical permutations that dwell with the dialogical, agonistic or even public aspects of the discursive). My line of argument will instead gravitate toward an understanding of the discursive as the polyhedral site of enunciation including and extending beyond its interrelation with dialogical models. The discursive as a site is incisively discussed in a rigorous art-historical analysis of site-specificity from 1997 by Miwon Kwon who observes that 'both the art work's relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) *and* the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are *subordinate* to a *discursively* determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate.'[9] For Kwon,

[8] Ibid., 216.
[9] Miwon Kwon, 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,' *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 92 [emphasis in original].

'discursively' means '(inter)textually,' a modality that resembles 'the pattern of movement in electronic spaces of the Internet and cyberspace, which are […] structured to be experienced *transitively*.'[10] In Chapter 1, following Fraser, Danto, Buchloh and Foster, I have suggested that it is art institutions and *discourses* rather than the art itself that validate art as art and demarcate an art world. What we begin to glimpse through Kwon's elaboration on the intricacies between the discursive mode and the shaping of contemporary subjectivity is that they extend beyond the increased importance of discursivity as a constitutive force of the art world and dovetail with the contingent, transitive and artificial process and sense of transversal autopoiesis.

It should also be noted that both the discursively constituted art world and the concept of the production of subjectivity contextualised through instituent praxis with its associations to signification and enunciation appear more akin to one another once the notion of the production of knowledge is considered. Directly associated with Rogoff's notion of knowledge as affective and pertaining to a-significatory forms that I discuss in Chapter 3 is her proposition that the epistemological division between the discursive and the artistic field fully collapses and artistic practice is redefined as production of knowledge. Challenging the normative duality whereby, on the one hand, art practice is equated with the creation of object-based artworks and on the other, art theory is reduced to analytical or interpretive criticism, Rogoff argues that 'instead of "criticism" being an act of judgement addressed to a clear cut object of criticism, we now recognise not just our own imbrication in the object or the cultural moment but also the performative nature of any action or stance we might be taking in relation to it.'[11] Pertinent to this is her definition of the curatorial which she understands 'not as a profession but as an organizing and assembling impulse, [that] opens up a set of possibilities, mediations perhaps,

[10] Kwon, 'One Place After Another,' 95 [emphasis in original].

[11] Irit Rogoff, 'What is a Theorist,' in *The State of Art Criticism*, ed. James Elkin and Michael Newman. (New York, London: Routledge, 2007), 97-98. The phrase 'our own imbrication' refers to the imbrication of whoever assumes the position of the critic.

to *formulate subjects* that may not be part of an agreed-upon canon of "subjects" worthy of investigation.'[12]

In short, according to Rogoff, the product of art, curating, and art theory is knowledge. Rogoff's recognition of thinning boundaries is astute and extends even beyond art, theory and curating as she suggests that 'we are living out a complex entanglement of practices in which it is almost impossible to chart the boundaries between imagining, making, theorizing, questioning, displaying, being enthralled by, administrating, and translating.'[13] Interestingly, the observable adhesive element is discursive, or rather, conversational: 'The field we currently call art consists of the intersections between all these, and it takes the form of a huge conversation.'[14]

Despite the advocation for and exploration of the affective, a-significational and non-discursive aspects of knowledge, power asymmetries in the art world and its educative institutional remit are far from eradicated. Yet, discursive practices in the realm of the curatorial have often been seen as contributing to such democratising efforts. As Tom Holert and Mick Wilson have noted, for some curators 'critical perspectives on art' have migrated 'from the mere retinal to the epistemic' and 'from the aesthetic to the educational'.[15] This shift resonates strongly with the practices of Institutional Critique and their artistic precursors that polemically uphold the centrality of the institutional in its relation to discourse, power and language, often at the expense of the perceptual and the specular. Viewpoints that hail discursive practices as democratising regard them as a counter-pole to the exhibition form which is usually associated with a finite, aesthetic and authorial result and thereby vulnerable to spectacularisation. Wilson has pointed to the paradoxical

[12] Irit Rogoff, 'Free.' *E-flux Journal*, no.14 (2010), accessed September 05, 2015, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/free/.
[13] Irit Rogoff, 'On Being Serious in the Art World,' in *Visual Cultures as Seriousness*, by Gavin Butt and Irit
Rogoff (London: Goldsmiths, University of London; Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 72.
[14] Rogoff, 'On Being Serious,' 72.
[15] Tom Holert and Mick Wilson, 'Latent Essentialisms: An E-mail Exchange on Art, Research and Education,' in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 322.

annihilation or obfuscation of what is exhibited through repeated and spectacular display and suggested that the exhibition remains the 'dominant valorisation of art as art'.[16] Angela Dimitrakaki has also made a related case of how the contemporary exhibition form undermines and obfuscates artistic labour.[17] Elke Krasny identifies a 'conversational mode' through which knowledge has been produced in the curatorial realm since the 1980s.[18] She argues that this mode has been circumventing the 'prevailing exhibitionary imperative' without of course overthrowing it. In pointing at the etymology of the word conversation that entails 'turning and twisting' *with* others, Krasny relates the conversational process with 'transformational qualities' as well as 'informal' ones. In terms of curatorial practice, she associates the expansion of discursive practices with conversations performed directly to a public or conducted privately and later publicised. Krasny suggests that conversations conducted 'in front of others rather than only with others' relinquish 'a certain degree of informality' and turn 'public'. However, Krasny does not ultimately distinguish between the discursive and the conversational and acknowledges that even the participants of a conversation can constitute a public.

What could be deducted from these viewpoints is that discursive or conversational formats are often considered to allow for more direct participation, informality and transformation than the exhibition form. By inviting (informal) discursive interaction and allocating knowledge production to a diverse set of contributors/audience rather than to a single authorial figure (usually the artist or the curator of the exhibition), discursive practices could indeed be regarded as unsettling the common idea of the exhibition as object-based or screen-based visual art arranged in space by the expert curator,

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[16] Mick Wilson (panel presentation at *On a Par? A Colloquy on Enquiry, Working Together, and Curating*, co-organised by Framework and Valand Academy, The Pearce Institute, Glasgow, September 30, 2016.) Instead of the dead-end dilemma of exhibition versus non-exhibition, Wilson suggests a turn to the 'exhibitionable': what can or cannot be exhibited or what shows differently.
[17] Angela Dimitrakaki, 'Art, Globalisation and the Exhibition Form,' *Third Text* 26, no. 3 (2012):317-19, accessed September 17, 2015, https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2012.679039.
[18] Elke Krasny, 'The Conversational Turn in Curating or Let's Twist and Talk,' *Open Space*, no. 1 (January 2013), accessed May 4, 2014, http://www.openspace-zkp.org/2013/en/journal.php?j=1&t=11.

whose expertise is to be passed on to the inexpert viewer, reproducing an authoritarian top-down pattern of knowledge-power. Mark Hutchinson paints a picture of curatorial work as administrative by definition and as such structurally necessitating expertise in order to justify its own function.[19] Dave Beech also offers an account on cultural expertise discussing it through the Weberian managerialism that emerged at the end of the 19th century as the inevitable outcome of the rise of bureaucracy in all fields, that eventually included art, culture and entertainment. The main idea in Beech's account is that Weberian rational bureaucracy by definition requires and has to rely on validated expertise as this is the only way to ensure that all parts of work or services – including culture and art – will be efficient, productive and properly conducted. Nonetheless, as I have hinted in Chapter 3, the Weberian form of expertise that rests upon a legal-rational validation and authority does not reflect adequately the figure of the arts or entertainment expert-as-facilitator encountered in post-Fordist economic and managerial models, whereby horizontal structures and decision-making, all-hierarchy-levels brainstorming, worker-participatory and creative design of work processes, self-evaluation, interdisciplinary perspectives and transferable skills are prominent if not dominant realities. What is more, discursive practices resonate strongly with both the figure of the expert-as-facilitator and many of the aforementioned post-Fordist managerial realities.

It could be argued that at the very least the rise of the discursive terrain as largely independent of the exhibition challenges the historical monopoly of the exhibition form as the proper way of engaging with art. Whether the general idea of appropriateness or correctness in engaging with art is challenged remains to be discussed and depends on the different types of discursive practices. Furthermore, the expansion of discursive practices in the art world suggests that artistic discourse is now less confined within the barricaded clusters of expertise and power as they also tend to congregate in Universities

[19] Mark Hutchinson, '*Who'd Be a Curator?,'* catalogue essay for Outpost project, Edinburgh Festival, 1994, accessed September 2, 2015, http://www.markhutchinson.org/writing/writing%20who%20d%20be%20a%20curator.html?d%20be%20a%20curator.html.

and other art-historical and art-critical disciplinary formations including (non-)academic art publications. Interestingly, the amplification of the discursive paradigm within curatorial environments has co-developed with shifts in art schools and higher education institutions that have sought to align themselves with such environments and experiment within the paradigm. However, such shifts showcasing the current artistic-curatorial-pedagogical compound as fully immersed in the art world should also be seen as aligned with a more extended history that dates back at least to the 1960s, if not in the beginning of the twentieth century. Indicatively, Charles Esche, the founder of the pedagogic experimental project 'Proto-academy' (1998-2002) in Edinburgh College of Art, has attempted a loose twentieth-century genealogy of universities and art schools that questioned hierarchical teaching methods and adopted more experimental approaches in Europe and North America:

> Consider Kazimir Malevich's art group UNOVIS in Vitebsk and the Institute of Artistic Culture, called INKhUK, in Moscow ; the Bauhaus in Weimar ; the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax and CalArts in Los Angeles in the 1970s ; the Free International Universities of the 1970s and 1980s under the initiative of Joseph Beuys and Caroline Tisdall, among others ; and more recently Goldsmiths in London and Jaroslaw Kozlowski's class at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.[20]

A digressive section on the project/institution

The organisational form of the project has been widely theorised as a key structure of late capitalism's precarious, mobile, flexible and service-based production. In their seminal work on *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, published in 1999, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello outline the concept of the project as a 'short-lived' 'transitory form' or endeavour whose participants seek to multiply

[20] Charles Esche, 'Start with a Table…,' in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 312.

their connections for further projects through networking.[21] In her book *Artificial Hells*, the art historian Claire Bishop discusses the 'art project' using Boltanski and Chiapello's definition. However, Bishop seems to have identified a somewhat different aspiration for the concept of the project in *art* projects since the 1990s. She argues that a 'project in the sense I am identifying as crucial to art after 1989 aspires to replace the work of art as a finite object with an open-ended, post-studio, research-based, social process, extending over time and mutable in form.'[22] So even as the project may be inextricably linked with late capitalism, which perpetuates precarious labour, in the world of art it comes with radically democratizing effects. As Bishop observes, '[a]lthough the project is introduced as a term in the 1990s to describe a more embedded and socially/politically aware mode of artistic practice, it is equally a survival strategy for creative individuals under the uncertain labour conditions of neoliberalism.'[23]

Bishop concurs with Boltanski and Chiapello's argument that the (art) project's success is unrelated to any 'intrinsic value' and that it is dependent on the generation of further projects through the participants' connections.[24] Thus, in order for workers in the creative industries to survive the precariousness of labour intensified by late capitalism, they have to operate in a project-based manner, which entails networking and constantly striving to make multiple connections. Given this set of circumstances, it could be argued that the project has become a hegemonic structure. Projects are increasingly seen as part of the (art) canon outside of which lies everything perceived to be uncool, boring, clueless, or naively ambitious. Being in-the-know regarding what is timely and relevant makes a good worker, and what is timely and relevant (i.e., the project) reinforces the precarious labour to which workers knowingly commit themselves. It could be argued, however, that the project has lost its

[21] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, 'The New Spirit of Capitalism,' *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18, no.3 (2005): 169, accessed September 10, 2015, doi:10.1007/s10767-006-9006-9.
[22] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 215.
[23] Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 216.
[24] Ibid.

ubiquity as a structure—or, rather, that its ubiquity has long been so irreversible that mourning for a pre-project period seems futile. Instead, it would make more sense to examine the shifts brought about by the pervasiveness of the project in its entanglement with other organisational forms and, in particular, with *institutions as bearers of nostalgia* for stability and security.

Raunig uses terms such as 'non-institutions' and 'pseudo-institutions' as well as the 'project-based institution' to discuss institutional assemblages of creative industries.[25] According to him, these assemblages are 'no longer structured in the form of huge media corporations, but mainly as micro-enterprises of self-employed cultural entrepreneurs' that 'prove to be temporary, ephemeral, project based.'[26] Moreover, as theorist Simon Sheikh observes, there is no small-scale, project-based, or 'niche' initiative that mega-institutions like the Tate Modern cannot reproduce, imitate, or even invent under their brand name.[27] Frustrating though this may be for small-scale radical endeavours, we need to be mindful of the way we perceive or construct institutional polarities or categories. Sheikh also suggests that in the early 21st century there is no such thing as a stable (art) institution, for even the Tate faces precariousness and financial instability, which lead to unsatisfying work contracts for its high-profile staff. I would add that even medium-scale, non-profit institutions (for instance, in the UK) tend to receive mixed funding, and therefore it becomes difficult to categorise them as 'public' institutions because of the nature of their funding. Conversely, often commercially active and for-profit institutions also attract public funding through non-profit sub-platforms. For instance, in 2014, the international art for-profit conglomerate/ institution Frieze (Frieze Events, Frieze Publishing and Frieze Art, owned by Denmark Street Limited) launched a non-profit venture or project (Frieze Public

[25] Gerald Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2013), 100-01.
[26] Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge*, 101.
[27] Simon Sheikh, 'Simon Sheikh explores the legacy of New Institutionalism' (paper presented at the symposium *Desire Lines: A Symposium on Experimental Institutional Formats*, David Roberts Art Foundation, London, November 28–29, 2014).

Programmes) that is entitled to public funding internationally. According to Frieze co-founder Matthew Slotover, the venture has been 'supported by EU Culture grants, private foundations, commercial sponsorship, and to a much lesser extent, the Arts Council of England.'[28]

Projects and institutions co-depend and co-exist to such an extent that their temporal differences, such as duration and permanence, as well as their accessibility, stability, and security are no longer attributable to a project-versus-institution axis. Perhaps in parallel with the general and global demise or increasing incapability of state structures to cater to public needs, it is no longer credible to argue that institutions (even public ones) are pillars of stability, job security, or permanence. At the same time, as I will further discuss in relation to the Former West research project, there can be projects that secure enough (public) funding to remunerate their contributors to a very satisfactory extent, albeit mostly as occasional participations, without being consumed by neoliberal forces or perishing into precarity. Their scale and duration of activity could easily place them in the category of institutions, if the distinction between projects and institutions had to be maintained.

Therefore, the usual perception of the institutional terrain in the arts that distinguishes the small-scale, self-funded, DIY projects or initiatives from the medium- or large-scale public or private institutions is deeply problematic, for it attributes *de facto* radicality and precariousness to the first type and stagnancy and security to the second. Understanding projects as embedded within an institutional assemblage whereby institution is a process and not necessarily a stable, monolithic function, it becomes clear that precariousness is the general condition underpinning the current organisation of labour and, as such, it is encountered throughout the institutional spectrum. However, what remains crucial in this networked terrain is instituent praxis, for it would propose a breaking with hierarchical or stagnant power relations and established norms. Indeed, Sheikh concludes that issues of size and stability—

[28] Mathew Slotover, conversation response to Morgan Quaintance, 'The New Conservatism,' (see Ch. 3, fn. 85)

or, I would add, permanence and duration—come second in relation to issues of 'governmentality.'[29] He maintains that all institutions and institution-making should be seen in terms of 'modes of governance and not just as places that produce and represent artistic or theoretical positions or reach out to an audience.'[30] The way institutions, projects or initiatives are governed should aim at being instituent, for instance, by breaking down stagnant hierarchies and democratising work processes. Work processes can range from exhibition-making or event-staging to what is considered tedious or managerial work. Thus, we might locate instituent moments either in terms of ground-breaking collectives or through reforms in large-scale influential organisations.

Four European university-projects

In keeping with the category of the project-institution, in this section, I examine examples of university-projects, as a particular sub-category that engages with the institutional form of the university, the institution of Higher Education par excellence, around the globe since the modern era. The projects I will examine engage with processes and formats of knowledge production that cross artistic and general education. Their small-scale project-based organisational form is clearly juxtaposed to the large-scale, national or metropolitan and ideally universal character of the university, both as it has been produced since modernity and in its contemporary neoliberal iterations. This juxtaposition has an experimental and propositional character animated in a realm of activist, political and artistic practice.

The four university-projects I discuss are the Copenhagen Free University (CFU) and the Anti-university of London (as a joint case study), Free/Slow University of Warsaw (F/SUW) and the Silent University. In the first part, I discuss the Copenhagen Free University (CFU) (active between 2001 and

[29] Sheikh, 'Legacy of New Institutionalism.'
[30] Ibid.

2007) and trace its posterior sibling-project, the ongoing archive Antihistory (active since 2012) that focuses on the Anti-university of London (established in 1968). The CFU was founded by artists Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen and aimed at operating within and exploring the 'self-organised institutional framework of a free university.'[31] The CFU sought to be affiliated with Situationism and referred to itself as a 'self-institution'. The Free International Universities within the remit of work and legacy of Joseph Beuys largely promoted the unleashing of 'democratic creativity' and have had a relatively strong art-world resonance; Beuys founded the Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research in his studio in 1973. Albeit present in the art world, the CFU could be seen as extending an earlier tradition of Free Universities that includes the Free University of New York and the Free University of Berkeley.[32] These universities resonated with a general climate of political upheaval and emerged predominantly out of drop-out or ousted staff from recognised universities due to protest or political dissonance around issues of civil rights, free speech, socialism and war opposition in the 1960s.[33]

The CFU upheld its independence from and rejection of state higher education and research structures and its opposition to a 'corporate way of thinking' that has been increasingly encountered in 'formal universities.' All the CFU meetings took place at the founding artists' apartment and courses headlined 'Art and Economy, Radical History, Media Activism, Feminist Organisations,

[31] The Free U Resistance Committee of June 18, 2011, 'All Power to the Free Universities of the Future,' Art and Education, July 4, 2011, accessed March 11, 2016, https://www.artandeducation.net/announcements/109996/all-power-to-the-free-universities-of-the-future.

[32] An indicative instance of The CFU's presence in the art world was the retrospective exhibition 'Trauma 1-11: Stories about the Free University in Copenhagen and the Surrounding Society in the Last Ten Years', (Roskilde, Museet for Samtidskunst, 2011) and was made in collaboration with CFU's 'apprentices' Emma Hedditch, Howard Slater and Anthony Davies. Also, the CFU had a discursive presence in various art platforms.

[33] Kasper Opstrup has discussed the Anti-university of London as traceable in the Free University Movement which, in turn, he associates with the Civil Rights freedom schools in Mississippi and the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, California. See: Kasper Opstrup, *The Way Out: Invisible Insurrections and Radical Imaginaries in the UK Underground 1961-1991* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2017), 76.

and Refugee Subjectivity.'[34] The structure, content and organisation of the courses were collectively designed by all project participants and the conversational process was emphasised over final outputs.[35] In 2007, the CFU Committee decided to terminate the project as by then they thought of it as 'too fixed' in its identification with a particular 'discourse relating to emancipatory education within academia and the art scene.'[36] They embraced the merits of the temporary nature of their project as they did not permit its perceived fixity to persist and fully cement. They announced the closure in a victorious statement that credited the hitherto experimentations and explorations of the project as continuations of the broader institutional framework of free universities and as potential 'hooks' for future ones. In 2010, however, they were notified by the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Development of a new higher education law that bans the use of the word 'university' in names of institutions unless they are state-authorised and interdicts self-organised and free (in the sense of anti-State or non-statutory) 'universities' throughout the country. The ministry was aware of CFU's preceding closure, so this notification served as warning in case they ever decided to reopen. The ministry officials justified this decision claiming that it was to prevent the dismay of students.

The year 2012 finds Jakobsen conducting archival work on the Anti-university of London, an experimental therapeutic/ educational initiative that was founded in 1968 by psychoanalysts and psychiatrists Joseph Berke, David Cooper, Leon Redler, Juliet Mitchell and Marxian economist Allen Krebs.[37] The Anti-university of London experimented with the idea of psychotherapy as part of learning in a context that attempted to be constantly self-reflective and challenging to its own operative structure. It was initially to be integrated with the 'anti-hospital' in Kingsley Hall (Bow, East London), an experimental

[34] Jakob Jakobsen, 'We Have Won!' (presentation at the *Creative Time Summit: Revolutions in Public Practice 2*, the Cooper Union, New York, October 9, 2010), accessed March 14, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3QlXOf1Hzw.
[35] The Free U Resistance Committee, 'Free Universities of the Future.'
[36] Ibid.
[37] Jakob Jakobsen, 'The Pedagogy of Negating the Institution,' *Mute*, November 14, 2013, accessed October 3, 2015, http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/pedagogy-negating-institution.

psychiatric community independent of official bodies and initiated in 1965 by a team of psychiatrists, many of whom would soon also be involved in the Anti-university and included the prominent Scottish psychiatrist Ronald David Laing.[38] In this anti-hospital practice, there was a desire to disconnect from the preexisting roles of doctor and patient.[39] Many of the doctors had moved in Kingsley Hall in order to create a shared everyday with patients in a 'self-organised therapeutic community.'[40] Berke's propositions to develop the anti-hospital into an anti-university incorporating the alternative educational format and mentality of the Free University of New York (FYNY) in which Berke had been involved fell through, as they were deemed too divergent from a primarily therapeutic orientation.[41] In December 1967, Berke's proposed initiative materialised in Shoreditch, East London, aided by friendly rent prices on behalf of the landlords, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, and a loan from the Institute of Phenomenological Studies.[42] The courses were open to everyone and they were attended by audiences that ranged from residents of Kingsley Hall to students of the London School of Economics. Topics covered political theory, social movements, art, literature and poetry, psychiatry and psychology, media and experimental drugs. Despite the impression of solid structure that a course catalogue might give, there was a strong sense of openness and urgency to participate in the process of collective self-reflection around aspects of curation of syllabus and organisation, which often aimed at disengaging from distinctions between students, teachers and administrators. Many people had begun living in the building, a development that was mainly welcomed. After a six-month running period, however, due to tensions

[38] Jakobsen, 'Pedagogy.'
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid. The FUNY was co-founded by Alex Krebs, Sharon Krebs and James Mellen in 1965, in response to perceived failings in the official higher education and in alignment with political dissonance of the time. Its alternative courses tapped into radical social movements, Cold-War-related politics and history, marxian economics and cinema. Interestingly, in 1967, the FUNY had to change its official name into Free School of New York due to a legal framework that prohibited initiatives lacking the 'appropriate facility' from using the term 'university'. See: Toru Umezaki, 'The Free University of New York: The New Left's Self-Education and Transborder Activism' (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 1.
[42] Jakob Jakobsen, ed., *Antiuniversity of London: Antihistory Tabloid*, (London: MayDay Rooms, 2012), 11.

between the administrating and coordinating committee and other participants and building-associated financial shortages, the Anti-university had to leave its premises. It continued to operate at least until 1971 through meetings at people's flats and other temporary locations largely coordinated via telephone.

Jakobsen conducted a large part of his archival work on the Anti-university in the context of Documenta 13 (2012) and the adjacent project AndAndAnd (January 2012 until May 2013) and under the auspices of MayDay Rooms in London.[43] Jakobsen's archival work that includes visual documentation and new interviews and essays has led to the publication *Antitabloid* and the blog Antihistory.org, both available for free. For various reasons, Jakobsen shifted from being actively involved with the setting up and running of an actual free university in the early 2000s to conducting a thorough archival but also active work into the historical legacy and the twenty-first-century resonances of an anti-university in the late 1960s. Instead of interpreting the historical significance of this shift that would range from case-specific structural and practical reasons to a potential pertinence to a broader 'archival' turn – another purported recent turn in the art world, I would like to simply register the two different modes of engaging with the setting-up of alternative and mainly discursive institutions.

Free/Slow University of Warsaw (F/SUW) is another university-project initiated in 2009 by Kuba Szreder, a freelance curator and currently a lecturer in the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in collaboration, with Bogna Świątkowska, the chairman and artistic director of Bęc Zmiana Foundation of Warsaw. In his PhD thesis (2014), Szreder describes F/SUW as an 'unofficial research collective, which investigates conditions of contemporary cultural production, is involved in politicised self-education, partakes in public debates regarding cultural policies and publishes related materials.'[44] F/SUW should be first and

[43] MayDay Rooms describes itself as an 'archive, resource and safe haven for social movements, experimental and marginal cultures and their histories.' 'MayDay Rooms,' MayDay Rooms, accessed March 14, 2016, http://maydayrooms.org/.

[44] Kuba Szreder, 'Politicising "Independent" Curatorial Practice under Neoliberalism: Critical Responses to the Structural Pressures of Project-Making' (PhD diss., Loughborough University, 2014), 153.

foremost geographically differentiated from all the aforementioned practices, as it operates in a post-socialist capital city. Despite its rapidly developing economy and the adjacent enforced narratives of 'transitioning' to a progressive, capitalist democracy, contemporary Poland often shows little tolerance to Marxist or other forms of anti-capitalist discourse, even though it is only totalitarian practices that are officially outlawed. Marxist conferences and members of the Communist Party of Poland are semi-cencored or overly policed in what has been described as 'anti-communist and anti-left witch hunt.'[45] It should nonetheless be mentioned that a research study of a monographic output that explicitly examines the university as common comes from Poland (Krystian Szadkowski, 2015).[46] In the midst of this dire political climate, F/SUW thematises the 'conditions of cultural production' and labour with an emphasis on 'project-making' as the dominant organisational structure 'under neoliberalism,' to which it counterposes slowness. Initially, the strategies of F/SUW aimed at a 'discursive critique' of neoliberal amendments to cultural policy and included 'critical discussions, seminars, bar-camps, workshops,' the publication of the Polish translation of the *European Cultural Policies 2015* report (Lind and Minichbauer, 2009) and the co-authored *Manifesto of the Committee for Radical Change in Culture* (2009). F/SUW's activity shifted gradually from critique to research-orientated discourse without however diverting from its thematic areas. In early 2016, F/SUW released 'Art Factory. Division of labour and distribution of resources in the Polish field of visual art,' which Szreder regards as the project's 'most comprehensive report.'[47] In 2016 and 2017, F/SUW organised two research summer camps respectively, the first in Poland and the second in Greece. In 2016, F/SUW collaborated with the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw to host a session of Former West, a European transnational research project which I discuss

[45] Piotr Tronina, 'Poland: Stop the state sponsored anti-communist and anti-left witch hunt,' *Socialist World*, July 16, 2018, accessed February 15, 2019, http://www.socialistworld.net/index.php/international/europe/poland/9887-poland-stop-the-state-sponsored-anti-communist-and-anti-left-witch-hunt.

[46] Krystian Szadkowski, *Uniwersytet jako dobro wspólne. Podstawy krytycznych badań nad szkolnictwem wyższym* [The University as Common Good: Critical Research in Higher Education] (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers PWN, 2015).

[47] Personal interview with Szreder, 2018.

further in subsequent sections. The session focused on issues of creative labour under post-work conditions. Since 2018, F/SUW has been in a 'dormant state' and has 'mutated into' projects and organisations, some of which I refer to in following chapters.[48]

F/SUW was an informal initiative with no official or legal status. It had no offices or set location and was mostly present at (artistic) discursive events such as international conferences.[49] Unlike the CFU and the Anti-university of London, F/SUW (in cooperation with Bęc Zmiana Foundation) was partly supported by public funding (Municipality of Warsaw, Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage), even though it was openly critical to the Polish State's cultural policies including 'grant systems.'[50] Furthermore, F/SUW proclaims its direct inspiration from Beuys's Free International University.[51] This influence is arguably accordant with F/SUW's focus on the social conditions and relations of cultural production.

The Silent University was initiated in 2012 in London by artist Ahmet Öğüt (born in Turkey, based in Amsterdam and Berlin). The project drew inspiration from the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, a Boston-based women's network of education that operated through mail exchange (and therefore silence) and was founded as early as 1873 by Anna Eliot Ticknor.[52] In a similar logic, the Silent University developed into a knowledge exchange platform among refugees, asylum seekers or other marginalised parts of society who have experienced displacement. Such displaced individuals are often not allowed to work or their skills/ expertise are not recognised as such in the country of residence due to legal, linguistic, cultural and other reasons.[53]

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[48] Ibid.
[49] Szreder, 'Politicising,' 153.
[50] Ibid., 155.
[51] 'F/SUW,' accessed October 30, 2018, http://www.wuw-warsaw.pl/oprojekcie.php?lang=eng.
[52] Ahmet Öğüt, 'The Silent University,' *Ahmetogut.com*, accessed November 2, 2018, http://www.ahmetogut.com/ahmetwebfrieze2012.html, originally appeared as part of Sam Thorne, 'New Schools: A survey of recently founded artist-run art academies and education programmes,' *Frieze*, no. 149, September 2012.
[53] 'The Silent University: Towards a Transversal Pedagogy,' The Silent University, accessed November 2, 2018, http://thesilentuniversity.org/.

Silence refers both to the silenced subjects of knowledge as marginalised but also to the 'silent' modes of knowledge exchange and production. Such modes aspire to circumvent linguistic and disciplinary barriers and arguably extend towards enunciation and affective knowledge, through group reflection, performance and gesture, writing and other visual elements of the knowledge exchange/production process.[54] The Silent University operates through lectures, discussions, events, publications and resource archives. Titles of accessible online courses include 'How to Set up Your Own Business', 'the History of Kurdish Literature' and 'Outside of Asylum'.[55] The teaching of courses is open to anyone who wants to share their professional or academic knowledge or their lived experience and anecdotal knowledge of displacement.

Contrary to the previous university-projects, the Silent University has been not only renowned in the art world but also supported by and collaborated with prestigious art institutions throughout its course. It started in the context of a residency that Öğüt had with Tate Modern and Delfina Foundation and was thus supported by the two institutions and developed in collaboration with the Tate's curators Nora Razian and Cynthia Griffin. The project later migrated into other European art institutions such as the Showroom in London, Tensta Konsthall and ABF Stockholm in Sweden and Stadtkuratorin Hamburg, was active in Aman, Jordan and Athens, Greece and gradually developed into a small-scale organisation or, indeed a project-institution. In 2013, the Silent University won the Visible Award.[56] The project is currently active and has developed into further collaborative permutations of itself such as the Silent University Ruhr (active since 2015) in Mülheim an der Ruhr – a collaboration between Impulse Theater Festival, Ringlokschuppen Ruhr and Urbane Künste Ruhr. In 2018, the Silent University returned to Stadtkuratorin Hamburg and

[54] Öğüt, 'The Silent University.'
[55] 'Courses,' The Silent University, accessed November 2, 2018, http://thesilentuniversity.org/course/.
[56] Visible is an organisation founded by Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation and Fondazione Zegna that has been awarding socially-engaged art since 2011.

implemented anti-racist events such as the 'We 'll Come United: the Silent University Truck with Open Mike.'[57]

The discursive, the exhibitionary and the 'eye of power'[58]

This analysis of university-projects should not give the impression that the curatorial/pedagogical landscape led by discursive practices has shifted or strives toward democratic production and distribution of knowledge and participatory work ethos. Despite their seeming democratising effects, discursive practices are not always celebrated. For example, Peio Aguirre states the following: 'instead of lecture series we have "discursive projects," because the former is now construed as boring; instead of exhibitions, we have "multifaceted" events, because the former is now deemed visually hierarchical and one-dimensional.'[59] Aguirre's ironic use of quotation marks as well as the implied passivity with which 'we' are supposedly enduring a situation that is 'now' inflicted upon us allude to another established state of affairs whereby 'discursive projects' and 'multifaceted' events form a new methodological imperative.

In his thorough ethnographic analysis of the global biennial circuit from the 1990s onwards, Panos Kompatsiaris discusses the idea of the 'discursive exhibition' that refers to 'widespread conceptions of the art exhibition as a site of constructing, rather than merely replicating or reflecting visions of the world.'[60] According to Kompatsiaris, the discursive exhibition designates a 'participatory and discursive mode of address' that overarches the formats, intentions and aims of the exhibition.[61] Documenta X (1997) curated by

[57] 'We 'll Come United' is an anti-racist network assembling communities and organisations, businesses and individual participants under an anti-racist campaign.
[58] Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex,' *New Formations*, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 77.
[59] Peio Aguirre, 'Education With Innovations: Beyond Art-Pedagogical Projects,' in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson. (London: Open Editions, 2010), 178.
[60] Panos Kompatsiaris, *The Politics of Contemporary Art Biennials: Spectacles of Critique, Theory and Art* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 40.
[61] Kompatsiaris, *Contemporary Art Biennials*, 19.

Catherine David is (widely) considered to signal a paradigm shift to the discursive exhibition in global large-scale terms.[62] Importantly, however, such mode of address ultimately bears the authorship of the curator: 'The indisputable author of this discursive happening is the curator, a figure of enhanced creative autonomy that partly through the biennial often rises to the status of a luminous and acknowledged semi-celebrity.'[63] Kompatsiaris's observations indicate that the art world has not exactly switched to discursive practices, despite any tendencies towards such switch. Rather, discursivity is incorporated in multiple scales into the curatorial-exhibitionary complex whereby authorial expertise, individual authorship and spectacularisation are far from eradicated. To make matters worse, the purportedly democratising shift toward the affective and a-significatory knowledge production appears to remain rather limited. In Rogoff's view, albeit a 'huge conversation', the art world ultimately hinges and depends on the idea of art as a predominantly object-based spectacle: 'art is, again and again, brought into one single category whose ultimate expressions are visual excitements, displayable objects, or other 'consumables'.'[64] Furthermore, from a managerial and organisational perspective, flattened hierarchies and increased participation may not balance the effects of power asymmetries; the absence of rationalisation and pre-defined roles goes hand in hand with self-evaluation and self-criticism, leading to an increased dependence on power relations built on prestige and confidence which in turn are largely attributable to social inequalities and biases. In other words, more democratic formats and structures do not necessarily reduce dependence on power as expertise in the art world, while this expertise translates into familiarity with the discursive game and a sense or performance of one's self-image. This predicament arguably extends beyond the labour relations and hierarchies of institutional constellations in the art world and reaches existing or potential audiences,

[62] Ibid., 25.
[63] Ibid., 41.
[64] Rogoff, 'On Being Serious,' 69.

oftentimes with highly alienating effects. I return to some of these issues in later sections of this chapter.

In order to begin to disentangle some of the emergent paradoxes or dissonant narratives regarding the democratising potential of discursive practices in the art world, we need to tap into the core of the discursive in its relation to pedagogy in (art) institutional terms and, perhaps more broadly, consider potential useful interactions with the conceptual terrain of instituent praxis. Is there a more productive way of reformulating the recurring conundrum that infallibly fuses the increase of audience participation and public engagement with a process of spectacularisation adjacent to discount, squander and other symptoms of commodity fetishism? How do otherwise democratising processes relate with persisting asymmetries of power, when such asymmetries appear unsubstantiated outside the discursive power game but really are subordinate to broader social inequalities?

Simon Sheikh incisively argues that the educational or discursive turn in the art world is actually a '*re*turn' in that the historical context wherein education is examined in relation to power within institutions of display is at least a few centuries old, thus predating the expansion of discursive and participatory formats in the 1990s, as well as the rise of curating as an expanded and distinct professional field.[65] Sheikh draws on Tony Bennett's analysis of museums, exhibitions and other institutions of display from the eighteenth century onward in North and West Europe in his groundbreaking essay '*The Exhibitionary Complex*.'[66] Bennett discusses these institutions as formative of people's taste, class consciousness and social mobility, historical and geopolitical perspectives and even everyday behavioural habits as these pertain to off-work time, leisure or the consumption of spectacles. In this, he critiques Douglas Crimp's perspective, which is partly responsible for the association of the museums and the disciplines of the art world with the Foucauldian oeuvre on institutions of confinement such as 'the asylum, the clinic and the prison.'[67]

[65] Sheikh, 'Letter to Jane,' 66 [emphasis in original].
[66] Bennett, 'Exhibitionary.'
[67] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), 45.

Bennett suggests that there should be a distinction between the purely coercive power of institutions of punishment, incarceration and surveillance, as addressed by Foucault, and power through persuasion, as encountered in European museums or expositions since the eighteenth century, without implying that the former mode of power is necessarily absent from such exhibitionary institutions.[68] According to Bennett's elaboration on Foucault's writings, the later phase of the carceral system (nineteenth century onwards) finds the penitentiary 'removed from the public gaze' and aiming at the 'correction of the offender' rather than the 'production of signs for society.'[69] Unlike previous forms of punishment that included public display, in this phase, the body of the convicted represented nothing.[70] The technologies of panopticism ensured that everything was visible to the 'eye of power' and prevented all other flows of vision and signification.[71] The only aim was to manipulate and transform the 'behaviour' of *individual* offenders 'through repetition' and coercion.[72]

By contrast, Bennett associates the exhibitionary institutions that developed in the same period with display technologies that pertain to the 'panorama' as much as the panopticon.[73] The architectural construction of Crystal Palace, the transparent, iron-and-glass, greenhouse-like building that was first designed to host the Great Exhibition in 1851 in London, exemplifies a system that allows for wide panoramic views from most positions of its interior.[74] Such exhibitionary technologies encountered also in museums and fairs offered '*the public*' panoramic views to the exhibits but also included points from which 'everyone could be seen, thus combining the functions of the spectacle and surveillance.'[75] Bennett crucially argues that, on the one hand, in this exhibitionary context, the 'specular dominance of the eye of power' is

[68] Bennett, 'Exhibitionary,' 76-82.
[69] Ibid., 77.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 81.
[74] Ibid., 78.
[75] Ibid. [emphasis added].

'democratised' and becomes 'available to all,' as, unlike the dynamics of visibility in the panopticon, 'the crowd' can see everything and everyone in the crowd.[76] At the same time, the crowd becomes 'visible to itself' as 'the ultimate spectacle' and thus, due to the coercive effect of being visible by power, the crowd is 'regulated through self-observation.'[77] Furthermore, Bennett argues that in contrast to the dynamics of the panopticon where the convicts are related to the eye of power as individuals, the crowd permits signification '*en masse*'.[78] Therefore, in the exhibitionary complex, the specular public does not simply function as a mirror/screen for coerced self-surveillant individuals; it is also a coming together in order to willingly watch, learn and transform.

Following up on this discussion, Sheikh concurs that '*the right way* of seeing was not to be enforced on the spectators but, through the exhibitionary complex, was offered as narrative pleasure, giving the spectator access to the viewpoints of power […].'[79] Regarding contemporary institutions of the art world, Sheikh contends that they sustain this dual implication of both the 'means of control over the language *on* art' and the simultaneous provision of the means 'to know what power knows, to know what is both desirable *and* attainable.'[80] The educational or the discursive turn is understood as a contemporary facet of the curatorial, mediational and pedagogic functions which are distinct merely on the basis of rhetoric.[81] Essentially, the pedagogy at play as mediation and/or as curating is 'constitutive of the institution.'[82] For Sheikh, pedagogy as institutional mediation amounts to the formulation of a 'mode of address' that 'produces a public.'[83] This mode of address unfolds as 'the exhibition […] places the spectators in a specific relation to works and narratives.'[84] Or more broadly, this mode unfolds in all those curatorial and

[76] Ibid., 78-81.
[77] Ibid., 81-82.
[78] Bennett 76 [emphasis in original]
[79] Sheikh, 'Letter to Jane,' 65 [emphasis in original].
[80] Ibid., 67 [emphasis in original].
[81] Ibid., 66-68.
[82] Ibid., 65
[83] Ibid., 69-70.
[84] Ibid.

organisational 'processes' of the institution and – I would add – the project-institution, that 'inscribe both subjects and objects in specific relations of power and knowledge, in a transfer of knowledge and a coordination of desire and agency.'[85] Thus, in Sheikh's view, the production of a public as pedagogy is inherent in the function of the institution and refers to the production of subjects through and with (objects of) knowledge, desire and agency. The question that immediately arises on a definitional level is whether what is particular about instituent praxis would approximate conceptually Sheikh's understanding of the production of publics through modes of address.

The public sphere and counterpublics

Sheikh's conceptualisation of the public follows up explicitly the theoretical thread or tradition of the public sphere as it was postulated by Jürgen Habermas in the 1960s and later critiqued and redefined by various authors.[86] Habermas's notion of the bourgeois public sphere rests upon the idea of private individuals of the newly emerging bourgeoisie coming together on the premise of rational and critical deliberation on matters that concern them.[87] In this sphere, the bourgeoisie could identify and publicly deliberate on its economic but also 'psychological' particularities and 'interests' and for the first time claim them as separate from and defensible by the newly emerging and shifting modern State and its authority.[88] The public sphere was thus seen as positioned between the 'private realm' (comprising the 'conjugal family's internal space' and the 'realm of commodity exchange and social labour') and the State that was shifting from aristocratic and feudal forms into modern, bureaucratic and nationally centralised structures.[89] This in-between public

[85] Ibid., 65.
[86] Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions,' 145-46.
[87] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 27-28.
[88] Habermas, *Public Sphere*, 18-20, 28-29.
[89] Ibid., 30.

realm took shape in newly founded 'institutions' such as 'the world of letters,' the press and the parliament.[90] Habermas historicised the public sphere as in principle willing to include the 'public at large'; 'everyone had to *be able* to participate' and open to subjects of all social and educational statuses.[91] At the same time, he historicised the real inaccessibility of the public sphere to large parts of the population and surveyed the reflection of principles of the public sphere in liberalist theory, as well as in socialist or other critiques, which uphold the impossibility of generalisations within a classed society.[92] Many authors including Alexander Kluge, Oscar Negt and Nancy Fraser have advanced such critiques with concepts that range from the 'proletarian' 'counterpublic' sphere (Kluge and Negt) to 'subaltern counterpublics' (Fraser).[93] Some of their main aims have been to highlight the exclusions that the concept of a singular public sphere would (inevitably) entail but also to open up the theoretical potential for its emancipatory aspects to serve disempowered social strata. For instance, in Fraser's framework, subaltern counterpublics are defined as 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups' such as 'women, workers, peoples of colour, and gays and lesbians' develop and practise 'counterdiscourses.'[94] Fraser argues that such publics need not identify common internal interests or concerns prior to the process of public deliberation; the counterpublic's 'common good' could be 'chimerical' while multiple and conflicting interests within it are plausible.[95] Fraser also refers to 'inter-public discursive interaction' among 'differentially empowered publics' – a condition underscored by the very definition of the counterpublics as

[90] Ibid., 29.
[91] Ibid., 37-38, 63.
[92] Ibid., 37-38. Habermas discusses these relations in the chapters 'The Ambivalent View of the Public Sphere in the Theory of Liberalism (John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville)' and 'On the Dialectic of the Public Sphere (Hegel and Marx).' See Habermas, *Public Sphere,* 129-40 and 117-29, respectively.
[93] Alexander Kluge and Oscar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, Theory and History of Literature 85 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,' *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56-80, accessed March 5, 2018, https://www.jstor.org/stable/466240.
[94] Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere,' 67.
[95] Ibid., 72.

subordinate to 'dominant social groups.'[96] Counterpublics are spaces for 'withdrawal and regroupment' as much as they are 'bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics.'[97] Members of (counter)publics seek to 'disseminate' their 'discourse into ever widening arenas' and 'understand themselves as part of a potentially wider public,' indeed, as per Habermas, the public at large.[98]

What is the political relevance of counterpublics today and is there a potential relation to instituent praxis in their production or development? Fraser crucially suggests that counterpublics could be 'explicitly anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian' and, if not, they can still be informally or implicitly exclusionary or marginalising.[99] Yet, she contends that, on the whole, counterpublics 'help expand discursive space' since they derive from exclusions on behalf of more dominant publics.[100] This conclusion should be further problematised at least on empirical grounds given the current, inflated conditions of discursivity within the networked and digitally mediated world, whereby the dividing line between counterpublics, virtual clans and other phenomena of fanatic overidentification and violent exclusion wears thin. One of the obvious dangers lies in the reinvigoration of neo-fascism as well as platforms for the so-called 'alt-right' – a supposedly alternative right wing – globally as well as the dangerously shrinking distance and blurred boundaries between obviously sarcastic and literally supportive statements of such (and other) ideology. I would suggest then that expanding the space for discourse is not or is no longer in and of itself sufficient to lead to more solidly democratic and emancipated societies. Rather, the operative conditions and dominant modalities that shape the discursive space contribute equally and can be determining, if not detrimental, especially considering that – and Fraser would concur to this – these extend beyond the designated spaces for the rational and the critical and into psychological, ethical, affective, quotidian and domestic realms. On a

[96] Ibid., 68.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 67.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

preliminary basis, I would argue that in order to examine contemporary discursivity there is a necessity for concepts that prioritise neither rational and critical discourse nor its psychic and affective elements, but rather, affective knowledge and an instituent contingency that could hope to foreclose market equilibria of fanatic identification or disidentification. In relation to this, I will refer further to the fragile relation between the market and the public. In any case, it remains contestable whether the concept of the counterpublic is adequate towards emancipatory ends, if it can encompass on equal terms anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic and reactionary social formations.

Furthermore, even though the common good of a public can be chimerical, the public arguably maintains – at least in Fraser's account – its conceptual specificity based on a discursive arena ultimately grounded on some type of (perceived) commonality or common good. Perversely, however, in conjunction with its expansive and widening tendency, the counterpublic runs the danger of lapsing into an identity-propagating and hyper-polarising machine through the – perhaps unconscious – designation of public identification or disidentification as the ultimate condition for inclusion in the public discourse. The ongoing anxiety about publicly claiming or disclaiming one's own identity and its nuances often through the invocation of perceived moral codes attests to such designation. Contra liberal calls for general unity despite differences, it should be evident that this situation is the result of broader social inequalities and hierarchies as experienced by oppressed and marginalised parts of the population.

However, even in cases of disempowered counterpublics with emancipatory and egalitarian agendas, the discursive identificatory imperative rather than protecting particularly sensitive members of the counterpublic tends to operate at the expense of intersectionality, solidarity and further struggle. For instance, a recent gender-related fiery issue has been the dissonance between feminists who oppose the right of trans-women to self-identify as women and thereby be part of women-only spaces and trans-advocate feminists that they often characterise the former group as trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERF),

an internet-acronym often used and perceived as slur.[101] The former view is often justified with actual occurrences of transgender violent attacks towards women in female prisons but also with accusations on the premise of transgender women perpetuating gender binaries and stereotypes in the form of outfit and cosmetics choices. While the latter group is seen as representing a younger generation of social-media-lingo savants, the former is depicted as old-school and representative of a bygone generation – either side presented positively or negatively depending on the article. As Judith Butler noted in one of her lectures on 'non-violence', even though there are difficult issues to be tackled around violence in safe spaces for women that involve transgender women, there is no excuse for giving up on solidarity and intersectionality between trans people and women who face exclusion and gender-related bigotry from the broader and dominant patriarchal conditions.[102] What is of particular relevance to discursivity is that the declining predisposition for (fruitful) discourse among disagreeing fronts of gender-related emancipation might be associated with identity-fixated micro-counterpublics that deem their identificatory-representative credentials too sacrosanct to jeopardise with opportunities for solidarity.

These observations will be further clarified once they are examined in the context of the discursive art world. Sheikh has used the concept of the counterpublic proposing the interpretation of the art world as a 'public sphere' consisting in internal fractions that take the form of counterpublics.[103] In his later analysis that focuses on the pedagogical and the exhibitionary in their relation to art institutions, instead of expanding on the 'counter-' relation, he places the emphasis on the *mode of address* that carries the potential to

[101] See: Julie Bindel, 'Why Woke Keyboard Warriors Should Respect Their Elders,' *UnHerd*, October 24, 2018, accessed December 3, 2018, https://unherd.com/2018/10/woke-keyboard-warriors-respect-elders/.
Also see: Paul Flynn, 'Paris Lees is more than a transgender rights activist, she's the voice of a generation', *i-D magazine*, 13 April 2015, accessed December 3, 2018, https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/bjz77a/paris-lees-is-more-than-a-transgender-rights-activist-shes-the-voice-of-a-generation.
[102] Judith Butler, 'My Life, Your Life: Equality and the Philosophy of Non-Violence' (The Gifford Lectures, Bute Hall, University of Glasgow, October 1-3, 2018).
[103] Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions,' 146-47.

produce publics and calls for 'a renewal of how "publics" are conceived and produced.'[104] Sheikh does not provide a thorough description of this renewal but he gives hints. First, he focuses on Michael Warner's definition of the public – a specific public out of many possible ones that can be produced '*by virtue of being addressed.*'[105] Warner writes: 'A public is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself. It is autotelic; it exists only as the end for which books are published, shows broadcast, Web sites posted, speeches delivered, opinions produced.'[106] This is a definition that denotes the 'textual' nature of publics and is fairly compliant with Kwon's understanding of the discursive as (inter)textual and transitively experienceable. Echoed in this textual logic of the public is Sheikh's exhibitionary/pedagogical/curatorial mode of address that the art institution lays the ground for and articulates. In this context, it is also noteworthy that Sheikh refers to the production of *subjects* in relation to power and knowledge within the notion of a public that is being produced through a specific mode of address. This reference brings us in the vicinity of instituent praxis and the production of a transversal subjectivity and permits further deliberation on these relations. The second hint that Sheikh provides is the distinction between the singular public and multiple publics in the context of exhibitionary institutions – a distinction already articulated in broader terms by Fraser, Kluge and Negt and even Habermas in relation to the publics omitted, excluded and precluded by the bourgeois public sphere that masks as singular. Sheikh points to the '*historical* role' of exhibitionary institutions in producing 'a national citizenry and […] a specific bourgeois subject-of-reason' as a *single* public, nodding to Bennett's analysis of the growing bourgeois class in Europe.[107] Sheikh asserts that there is no longer a unified public and that the museum has lost its centralising role, even when it acts as a 'mass-medium' of blockbuster exhibitions.[108] Sheikh recognises the

[104] Sheikh, 'Letter to Jane,' 68.
[105] Michael Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics,' *Public Culture* 14, No. 1 (Winter 2002):50, accessed March 6, 2018, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/26277 [emphasis in original] quoted in Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions,' 145-146.
[106] Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics,' 50
[107] Sheikh, 'Letter to Jane,' 70.
[108] Ibid.

decline of a unified (bourgeois) public sphere as he cautions against the fragmentation of publics in the form of market segments 'with particular demands to be catered to and commodified.'[109] Referring more broadly to the realm of culture industry, he observes that the '*contingent* modes of access and articulation' operative within a public are straightforwardly 'replaced' by modes of access of the market such as 'commodity-exchange and consumption.'[110] The question he is led to crucially returns to the art institution:

> If the art institution had the historical role of affirming and constituting the bourgeois class and its values, and thus tried to produce it as a public through very specific modes of address, what modes of address shall be put in its place, what imagined publics shall be represented and authorised, and how?[111]

Sheikh deals with this question by proposing 'to think of a contradictory and non-unitary notion of a public sphere, and of the art institution as the possible embodiment of this sphere.'[112] He thereby urges for a 'conflictual' rather than 'consensual' understanding of the art institution.[113]

The issue at stake here is not whether Sheikh constructs the art institution as singular or as fragmented into sub-institutions, since he resolves this relation through Mouffe's agonistic framework, which I have already discussed in previous chapters.[114] However, without in the least diminishing the importance of producing counterpublics and understanding their internally and externally diverse character, I seek to distance the understanding of institution, at least in its processual sense, from its reduction to the concretisation of the discursive space that allows for the realisation or the production of a public or the public as a sphere.

[109] Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions,' 148.
[110] Ibid. [emphasis added] I return to the issue of contingency in the subsequent section.
[111] Sheikh, 'The Trouble with Institutions,' 149.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

Instituent praxis and the concept of the public

The advocation of the public that brackets off the historicisation of the public sphere cannot escape being affirmative, at least partially, even when it addresses its own exclusions. This could explain why Nancy Fraser is so devoted in her divestment of the concept from its misconstrued liberal connotations, despite Habermas's historicisation of the concept of the bourgeois public sphere in tandem with a critique of both its potential appropriation by liberal ideology and its relation to Enlightenment philosophy. The bourgeois class emancipated itself from the authority of the State by coming together on the basis of its *common* traits and interests – psychological, literary, domestic, economic, political, and thereby excluding those who could not afford to gather under these specific interests. Thus, any advocation of the (bourgeois or general) public sphere would affirm such and other exclusions as well as the logic of the market itself; the bourgeoisie sought to advance its private profit-related interests and its literary development through internal exchange (literary salons and letters) was, arguably, already one of cultural production and consumption. Furthermore, due to a primary grounding on commonality, any possible contingencies within the public's modes of access and articulation are secondary or marginal. Thus, they fail to shield the public from the identificatory mechanisms at the service of the profit-driven market, further compounding the aforementioned binary dead-end that oscillates between affirmation and utopia in the context of the institution of art as an ideological construction. This condition is directly extendable to counterpublics. Even as they denounce their own being-excluded by dominant social groups and even if they only form chimerical common interests, the counterpublics cannot avoid *affirming* their own micro-exclusions *as well as* an internally dominant concrete logic/affect that cannot escape from being marketable/consumable. This is why the public appears so easily transmutable into the market segment or the culture industry. The public sphere has always been fully compliant and symbiotic with the market to begin with, even in the form of the securement of bourgeois entrepreneurial interests. It is the

concreteness of needs, desires and interests of counterpublics irrespectively of their critical attitude that not simply permits but facilitates the market's operation within the public. The plurality of needs, desires and interests does little to forestall this facilitation; it has hardly ever been an insurmountable problem for the market to diversify, re-identify and target accordingly.

A definition of the public as textual, transitive and triggered by a specific mode of address would not escape this conundrum, as the public could still be primarily grounded on a concrete commonality that could simply amount to the initial address. Alternatively, the address is completely ignored and thereby fails to produce a public. In reference to the exhibitionary complex, Sheikh writes: 'Subjects may negate mediation indirectly by refusing to turn up, thus refusing to become, however nominally, "the public".'[115] Unlike the modes of access and articulation of a public, its *formation* is indeed contingent. But in all these definitions of the public, its formation rests on dependency. Warner's textual definitions of publics range from the viewers of an advert to '[t]he people, scholarship, the Republic of Letters, posterity, the younger generation, the nation, the Left, the movement, the world, the vanguard, the enlightened few, right-thinking people everywhere,' assuming they have all become the target of an address.[116] This reduction of publics into rhetorical or literal addresses, is (a) as real as market segmentation and (b) indicative of the contingency of publics as reliant on an external force, which is not even necessarily oppressive or exploitative towards them.

Thus, Sheikh's use of Warner's definition risks rendering the formation of the public and the implicated subjectivity too dependent on power/knowledge implicit in the art institution. In this, on the one hand, Sheikh is right to point out the 'transfer of knowledge' and the 'coordination of desire and agency,' indicative of the panorama/panopticon complex. On the other hand, the supposed agency of subjects produced in and through their being permitted to access the eye of institutional/curatorial/pedagogical power can be

[115] Sheikh, 'Letter to Jane,' 69.
[116] Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics,' 55.

problematised in two senses. First, the panoramic function that Bennett identifies is deeply eroded in a neoliberal, post-television and post-internet era of marketed algorithmic art institutions and a transiently discursive art world. If it is granted that in the panorama, the violence of state power is not entirely at play, as its viewpoint becomes radically and collectively accessible 'en masse,' in the post-internet era, this condition does not quite hold. The panorama is now personal, atomised and customised, while it eloquently pretends to still be a panorama, something that provides access to all information and all spectacle. At the same time, the panopticon is ever more present and its private, concentrated algorithmic eye visible only to those who own it. As I discuss in Chapter 3 and further expand in subsequent sections, project-institutions in the (discursive) art world hardly escape this conundrum. Secondly, the theory of instituent praxis and the production of subjectivity as well as a great part of Foucault's philosophy suggest forms of agency that go beyond a power-dependent notion of the public, whereby subjects are produced by virtue of being addressed by the institution and invited to access the eye of power. I return to this point at the end of this chapter. Sheikh's position could alternatively be interpreted as implying the self-producing of publics, insofar as art institutions, apart from utterers of an address, are seen themselves as publics. Even in this case, however, the production or construction of institutions by *emerging subjectivities* cannot be adequately elucidated as *creative*, unless the theory of instituent praxis is employed.

Nonetheless, the affirmative function of (counter)public spheres far from annihilates their necessity and potential. It was perhaps in a similar logic that Bürger ultimately wished for the affirmative autonomy of art to persist in light of the pervasive means-end rationality. Admittedly, insofar as counterpublics recognise and address their own micro-exclusions and their own assumptions or reproductions of power, affirmation as a function grounded on its being-hidden appears (again) as flimsy in its inadequacy to fully account for its own internal contradictions. Affirmation might even appear irrelevant, to the extent that the publics make no claims of actually or imaginarily *fulfilling* a sphere that escapes or brackets off the logic of the market or a means-end rationality.

(Utopic, wishful, speculative or even programmatic visions do not have to operate through an affirmative sphere.) However, the conceptual constellation of the public prioritises and upholds concrete and formative commonality over differences, conflict and plurality, even if it accommodates the latter. The dangers of concretising and fetishising common identity and identification remain crucial, as they jeopardise the concurrent operation of the modalities of autopoiesis and heterogenesis that the proposed extended definition of instituent praxis involves. The two complex and abstract concepts working in tandem allow for ontogenetic virtuality and secure the production – rather than petrification – of transversal subjectivity, as they operate beyond or beneath commonality in terms of identification and at the level of co-production of new significations as rules of law.

The inadequacy of the use of plurality as a caveat that would supposedly safeguard from commonality as a form of closure can also be observed in relation to some of the thinking on instituent practices. Rogoff has suggested that 'it is not only the moment of instituting oneself but also the plurality of the activities involved […] that are the hallmarks of instituent practices, which thereby refuse the possibility of being internally cohered and branded.'[117] It remains doubtful whether the plurality of activities involved are enough to foreclose internal coherence, given the current ultra-sophisticated tools of marketing customisation even beyond the conscious control of individuals. The conversational and discursive art world have tried to accommodate plurality in the name of postulates to democracy and agonism, through discursive formats that reference a parliamentary quality often encountered in roundtables, panel discussions and workshops, but also project-institutions such as the ones I have already analysed. However, such attempts have been critiqued.

Bassam El Baroni has argued that Mouffe's agonistics and Habermas's concept of the public sphere, despite differences of political philosophical tradition, are both instantiated in the parliament, the former as a 'perpetual

[117] Irit Rogoff, 'Turning,' 45. (See Introduction, fn. 40)

battleground' and the latter as intrinsically involving 'conflict.'[118] In relation to the art world, El Baroni observes that agonism has turned into 'a franchising of democracy' and suggests that '[t]he value of political conflict as an abstract force upholding pluralist democracy is the only content in the license obtained by the art sphere; everything else is considered as form and technicality.'[119] Echoing Gardner's view of democracy as an empty signifier (discussed in the Introduction), El Baroni is not only wary of agonism turning into a mere 'blueprint' or 'formula' in the discursive art world, but also of its 'latent' hegemony due to its purported insurmountable technology of democracy.[120] Thus, agonism's predetermined dependence on a battleground structure of hegemony is liable to forcibly construct 'others as concrete' and cast them into an 'us/them relationship.'[121] In a similar vein, commenting in particular on discursive, process-based, and self-organised formats at the crossroads of education and curating, Rogoff advises caution against privileging such formats and 'the coming-together of people in space' over 'recognising when and why something important is being said.'[122]

These remarks are not to suggest that questions around discursive pedagogical formats and schematics should be discarded as of lower importance to what is being reasoned, argued, communicated, taught, and learnt, or – equally – the publics or subjects involved in these processes. Such questions would be directly implicated with curatorial, institutional, organisational and infrastructural methodologies and formations whose specifications obviously matter extremely in terms of endeavouring various modes of address. However, several questions emerge. Are formats and schematics more emancipatory when they constitute minorities or margins to dominant ones, as for example, theorists such as Krasny would argue about informal conversational formats in the art world? Furthermore, how should such formats and schematics be approached and examined when they

[118] El Baroni, 'Post-Agonistic Institution,' 232. (See Introduction, fn. 5)
[119] Ibid., 234.
[120] Ibid., 231-32.
[121] Ibid., 234.
[122] Rogoff, 'Turning,' 43,45.

become popular or eventually canonical, either overthrowing (and replacing) the old canon or co-existing on a par with it – the latter case being arguably applicable to the discursive and educational art-world formats (new canon) and exhibitions (old canon)? Since what is at stake in these questions lies clearly beyond a competition that would lead into a typology of emancipatory value, I will approach them through further analysis around, first, Foucault's concept of 'parrhesia' as he develops it in a lecture series in the early 1980s, and secondly, issues of access and other parameters of the contemporary discursive art world.[123]

Parrhesia, Cynicism and the 'currency'[124]

To address the need to distinguish important utterances from non-important ones as they emerge in the context of discursive formats, Rogoff has invoked Michel Foucault's concept of parrhesia as a mode of truth-telling.[125] Importantly, however, Rogoff stresses that truth, in this mode of truth-telling, remains a 'drive rather than a position.'[126] The discourse around parrhesia is not about the search for truth as axiom or dogma nor about the definition of truth as such. Instead, the object of the discourse around parrhesia is the exercise of the methodology of truth-telling while truth remains deliberately undefined in metaphysical or absolute terms.

Parrhesia is a concept that Foucault researched thoroughly in his later work, seeing it as a mode of truth-telling that requires willingly speaking one's own mind 'without concealing anything' even though it always involves risk for the person who speaks.[127] Parrhesia differs from other modes of truth-telling such as 'prophecy, wisdom, teaching and technique.' It is a mode of truth-telling that

[123] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*. (See Introduction, fn. 40)
[124] Ibid., 239.
[125] Rogoff, 'Turning,' 45.
[126] Ibid., 46.
[127] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 9-11.

'speaks polemically about individuals and situations' as opposed to 'enigmatically,' 'apodictically,' or 'demonstratively.'[128]

Foucault describes two types of *parrhesia* before he arrives at his analysis of Cynicism in Antiquity. First, he discusses political truth-telling which 'manifests itself as someone's assertion that they are capable of telling the truth' and 'is addressed courageously, on its own, to an Assembly or a tyrant who does not want to hear it [i.e., the truth].'[129] Foucault also defines ethical or Socratic *parrhesia* as the practice of *epimeleia* or the care of self. [130] Socrates cares for others by teaching them to take care of themselves.[131] *Epimeleia* requires investigation, testing, and care for the self.[132] It is about learning to turn inwards and test oneself in the sense of conjoining rational discourse (*logos*) with a way of living within the social (*bios*).[133] This form of *parrhesia* is directly associated with Cynicism, which is described as the *parrhesiastic* way of life.[134] Foucault defines Cynicism as 'the idea of a mode of life as the irruptive, violent, scandalous manifestation of the truth.'[135] In other words, Cynicism is about the practice and manifestation of truth *through* and *in* one's life: 'Cynicism makes life, existence, bios, what could be called an alethurgy, a manifestation of truth.'[136] Cynicism is not another version of *parrhesia* but the conduct of life that fronts *parrhesia* and its manifestation.

Raunig too has used the concept of parrhesia to suggest that instituent practices could move beyond the dead-ends of Institutional Critique by being both critical and propositional, by constantly striving against structuralisation and by performing both political parrhesia, i.e. in the realm of politeia, and ethical parrhesia, through a subject-forming self-inquiry.[137] In Chapter 2, I have

[128] Ibid., 27.
[129] Ibid., 87.
[130] Ibid., 86.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 86-87.
[133] Ibid., 127.
[134] Ibid., 149.
[135] Ibid., 183.
[136] Ibid., 172.
[137] Raunig, 'Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming,' 9-11.

discussed the first section of his argument in the context of instituent praxis and in relation to his ambiguous use of constituent power. Regarding the latter part which involves parrhesia, even though it is insightful, it is unclear how (and if) it relates to the theory of instituent practice and/or constituent power. It is also at times arbitrarily paired with specific sets of practices. For instance, Raunig considers the second form of truth-speaking (ethical *parrhesia*) to be the most pertinent to 'the relation between teaching and learning' because it upholds a mode of investigation, i.e., a 'calling-into-question' and a 'self-inquiry,' that leads to care for the self.[138] He argues that, in this case, knowledge is not fixed in a centre because 'knowledge production lies precisely in the movement from the inquirer to those who are guided by the inquiry to exercise self-care, to give account of the coherence between rational discourse and manner of living.'[139] Instead, Raunig thinks that Cynicism (and the practice of the Cynics) is not so pertinent to the relation of teaching and learning as it is to what he calls 'the new activisms of the twenty-first century.'[140] In fact, he sees roughly all current activism as a contemporary instantiation of Cynicism in antiquity.[141]

I would refrain from constructing a neat typology that straightforwardly matches isolated concepts of Foucault's archaeology with arbitrarily divided segments of contemporary social practice such as activism and teaching and learning. In a crucial passage in Foucault's lectures where he discusses the 'shifts and changes in parrhesia,' he elaborates on the relation between the 'three poles' of *parrhesia*—namely, truth-telling, 'politeia (the political institution, the distribution and organization of relations of power),' and 'the formation of *ēthos* or of the subject.'[142] Albeit irreducible to one another, the three poles are always inextricably linked to one another in a 'necessary and mutual

[138] Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge*, 59.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid., 150.
[141] Raunig refers to 'the new activisms of the twenty-first century: anti-globalization movement, social forums, anti-racist no border camps, queer-feminist activisms, transnational migrant strikes, Mayday movements of the precarious.' He also includes uprisings in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions and occupy movements of the same period globally. See Raunig, *Factories of Knowledge*, 150.
[142] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 66.

relationship.'[143] This constellation gathered around Cynicism and parrhesia is not dissimilar to the potential remit for instituent praxis, at least in terms of the discursive art world and the broader contemporary conditions of public discourse. The irreducible interrelation of truth-telling, political institutions and power and the formation of an ethos or subject nods to the theorisation of instituent praxis as unconstrained by the segmentations between constituent power, official and officialised law, administrative and technological structures and infrastructures and organisational schematics and formats. Rather, through an epistemological habitation of their interstices, overlaps and interrelations including those among discourse, ethics and the psyche, we might begin to further grasp the remit of the shift from power to instituent praxis. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, instituent praxis goes beyond both explicit power or implicit ground-power, as it does not aim at legitimising or officialising a sovereign pre-existing subject (thus, non-explicit) and the implicated particular or partial produced subjectivity becomes conscious of its (internal) unconscious code (thus, non-implicit). Yet, Foucault's mapping of the poles of parrhesia that sees power as diffused within knowledge and political structures all the way to signifiers and subjects might help denote not only the breadth but also the density of what might be stopping instituent praxis to perform its shift from power. In this, I do not intend to exhaust or reduce Foucault's philosophy that focuses on articulating a grammar of power into a concept deriving from the relatively more speculative and politically propositional – if not utopian – tradition of the Common. Instead, I propose Foucault's theorisation of power as the epistemological limit against which or despite which a theorisation of instituent praxis would have to develop, especially if such theorisation borrows from his later focus on parrhesia and the interrelation of its poles.

The 'Delphic precept "alter the currency" (*parakharaxon to nomisma*)' permits the tracing of a strong association between instituent praxis and Foucault's

[143] Ibid.

parrhesia and Cynicism.[144] The precept was addressed by the Delphi oracle to Diogenes the Cynic after he enquired on how he could expand or improve his reputation.[145] According to Foucault, the precept expresses one of the main principles of Cynicism.[146] The story of Diogenes the Cynic has multiple divergent versions but the crucial ambiguity rests on the multiple interpretations attributable to the precept that could be grouped in narrow ones and more abstract, metaphorical ones.[147] The former group refers to urges to dishonestly falsify or counterfeit the financial value of the currency or, as Foucault notes, 'a change of the effigy stamped on the coin, a change which enables the true value of the coin to be reestablished.'[148] The latter group of interpretations denotes two interrelated types of alteration, the initial juxtaposition of which Foucault retrieves from Julian.[149] First, the idea that the oracle referred to Diogenes's own currency and Julian's theory that the alteration of one's own currency requires self-inquiry. Diogenes is thus being urged to pass from the current, 'counterfeit' image of himself that includes others' views of himself through the 'true currency of self-knowledge' into the 'revaluation' of his own currency.[150] In short, Foucault refers here to accessing one's own currency as self-value through self-knowledge. A slight shift in perspective would suffice to regard this analysis as psychoanalytically connoted with elements of autopoiesis and self-creation with reference to making explicit an unconscious imaginary: 'to get to know himself, Diogenes had to be able to recognize himself, and be recognized by others, as superior to Alexander himself.'[151] Indeed, the parrhesia which is associated to *epimeleia* and the care of self 'addresses the *psukhē* of individuals and aims

[144] Ibid., 240.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid., 241.
[147] Foucault presents the story of Diogenes the Cynic predominantly through Diogenes Laertius's account in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Vol. II, Book VI (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1925). Regarding the second group of interpretations, he also draws on Emperor Julian's writings in Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, vol. II (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1913), especially regarding the relation between knowing oneself and altering the currency.
[148] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 239.
[149] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 241-42. See: Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*.
[150] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 242.
[151] Ibid.

at the formation of their *ēthos*' and Foucault discusses on various occasions within his lectures the 'soul' in relation to the body, intellect and parrhesiastic, Cynic life.[152] This is not however, a mere turn to the individual. The second alteration that Foucault discerns relies on the common signification between *nomisma* (currency) and '*nomos*, the law, custom.'[153] The precept then amounts to 'changing the custom, breaking with it, breaking up the rules, habits, conventions and laws.'[154] Foucault places the core principles of Cynicism in a critical synthesis of the various approaches of altering the currency:

> The Cynic battle is therefore not simply that military or athletic battle by which the individual ensures self-mastery and thereby benefits others. The Cynic battle is an explicit, intentional, and constant aggression directed at humanity in general, at humanity in its real life, and whose horizon or objective is to change its moral attitude (its *ēthos*) but, at the same time and thereby, its customs, conventions, and ways of living.[155]

This close interweaving of self-knowledge, ethics, customs, laws reflects the rigorous intricacies of the component of instituent praxis. It is in the core principles of Cynicism that we find resonances with instituent praxis that extend beyond logos or discourse, i.e. the production of subjectivity and the explicit polemics towards common forms of law, customs and conventions. As I will suggest, however, in the contemporary hyper-mediated and globalised world, such polemics are not enough as the Cynic way of life is in many ways inverted if not perverted. Regarding the discursive art world, the irreducible interrelation of the poles of parrhesia suggests that the consideration of the methods that focus on what is being said and its importance cannot take place independently of a critical examination of discursive formats and the variety of participatory qualities that they permit. I will focus this examination by

[152] Ibid., 65.
[153] Ibid., 242.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 280.

comparing two discursive projects-institutions from the art world that could be seen as aspiring to a parrhesiastic function in terms of knowledge structures.

Inversions and perversions of Cynicism in discursive practices: Former West and La Colonie

Former West (2008-2016) was a collaborative research project whose remit was transnational – predominantly European but also global – and transdisciplinary. The project was initiated by BAK, an Utrecht-based art institution, founded (in 2003) and directed by Maria Hlavajova. Hlavajova has been Former West's artistic director since its initiation.[156] Despite BAK's organisational contribution, the project has had a distinct presence in the discursive art world. Its network of collaborators comprised some of the most influential art and Higher Education institutions in Europe, such as Afterall (London), Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Goldsmiths (London), Reina Sofia Museum (Madrid), VanAbbe Museum (Eindhoven), SKOR Foundation for Art and Public Domain (Amsterdam), Tranzit.hu (Budapest), and Tranzit.cz (Prague). It was mainly funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.[157] Other funders included Mondriaan Fonds Amsterdam, City Council of Utrecht, European Cultural Foundation Amsterdam, and ERSTE Foundation.

Former West's primary aim has been to rethink the impact of the end of the Cold War and the categories of 'East' and 'West' through the remit of art and politics. This enquiry's starting point has been the belief that the post-Cold War impact on the so-called West has not been adequately acknowledged. The argument here is that even though the end of the Cold War and the advent of

[156] Charles Esche was the co-curator of Former West from 2008 until 2013. He also figured in ArtReview's 'Power 100' list in 2004, 2005, and 2014, an annual ranking of the contemporary art world's most influential figures. See 'Power 100,' *Art Review*, accessed September 12, 2015, http://artreview.com/power_100/.

[157] 'Creative Europe Projects,' Creative Europe Programme, accessed September 28, 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/projects/.

globalisation render the classification of the world into First, Second, and Third irrelevant, labels that imply Western hegemony such as 'former East'—a label used to describe countries that underwent a transition from state socialism to capitalism after 1989—still persist. Former West inverts this label in an ironic gesture that seeks to undermine this hegemonic relationship and attempts to reimagine a global horizon of equality. It defines itself in the following way:

> a long-term international research, education, publishing, and exhibition project, which from within the field of contemporary art and theory: first, reflects upon the changes introduced to the world (and thus to the so-called West) by the political, cultural, artistic, and economic events of 1989; second, engages in rethinking the global histories of the last two decades in dialogue with post-communist and postcolonial thought; and third, speculates about a 'post-bloc' future that recognizes differences yet evolves through the political imperative of equality and the notion of 'one world.'[158]

Former West took mainly the form of Research Congresses – large-scale public conferences, which average 300 attendees, at which academics, artists, curators, theorists, and/or other contributors are invited to present their work, give talks, or participate in panel discussions. These congresses took place in art institutions and art schools. Former West also employed other formats such as the Research Exhibition, the Research Seminar, and the Research Interview. During its initial phase in 2009 and 2010, Former West focused on Research Seminars, which were smaller in scale and shorter in duration than the Congresses, and Research Interviews with theorists, artists, curators, etc. in order to set a framework for ideas and propositions. Until 2014, Research Exhibitions were conducted one to three times per year in European art institutions. The project's culminating phase (2014-2016) took the form of Research Congresses as Public Editorial Meetings that led to a major publication of approximately 70 contributions entitled *FORMER WEST: Art and the Contemporary after 1989* (2017).

[158] 'About,' Former West, accessed 11 September, 2015, http://www.formerwest.org/About.

It could be argued that Former West epitomises the canonisation of discursive formats in the art world. It secured an upscale budget and a relatively long-term duration and featured a large number of prominent contributors and participants, who range from senior to young and emerging academics, theorists, and independent researchers, artists, curators, and activists.[159] It largely interrelated with and depended on some of the most solid and official transnational institutions in the world such as the Creative Europe programme and various official and high-ranking art schools. Such scale and officiality can be contrasted to the aforementioned university-projects that operated within largely unofficial formats at the relative margins or peripheries of official art institutions (Universities, museums, galleries). This scale and format allowed Former West to initiate and sustain a long-term discussion around some of the most politically-urgent global issues of post-Cold War history, situating them within a wider theoretical context and often inviting radical perspectives on them.[160]

At the same time, despite its relatively large-scale and institutional grounding, Former West did not lose sight of informal knowledge (visual, artistic, curatorial, or theoretical) as co-produced. It is also remarkable that the platform that accommodated multiple global contributions and projects from east and west, south and north started from a rather personal idea that Maria Hlavajova had when she moved from Slovakia to the Netherlands around 2000.[161] In a Former West session in London, Hlavajova explained that the project came about as a proposition to invert the so-called 'former East.' Importantly, Former West sought to reflect on and speculate on alternative geopolitical horizons

[159] For a list of contributors, see: 'Contributors,' Former West, http://www.formerwest.org/Contributors.
For the Former West budget, see: Creative Europe Programme, 'Creative Europe Projects.'

[160] Indicative titles of Former West congresses or sessions: *Art, its discourses, and the world at large (1989/2001/2008/*2009), *Representations of art in the Former West: exhibitions, art institutions, art market (1989-2009)*, and *Who is a 'people'? Constructions of the 'we'* (2015).

[161] Maria Hlavajova, 'Rael Artel, Maria Hlavajova, Iliyana Nedkova, Katarzyna Kosmala: *Sexing the Border*,' (Conversation at Word Power Books, Edinburgh, March 23, 2015) accessed September 12, 2015, https://vimeo.com/130040477. This event was the launch of Kosmala's edited collection, Katarzyna Kosmala, ed., *Sexing the Border: Gender, Art and New Media in Central and Eastern Europe* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

rather than to promote a prescribed or predetermined agenda – not dissimilarly to the university-projects that prioritised a processual and discursive research methodology.

Predictably, the extensive involvement of established figures and institutions hardly escaped the reproduction of existing power relations in the art world and a western-centric discourse. Nevertheless, it remains important to examine whether or how Former West is enmeshed in exclusionary, clan-generating mechanisms of power beyond the critique of its reproducing the symbolic power of certain individuals, organisations or geopolitical centres. In this examination, a useful parallel could be drawn between Former West and Foucault's account of the French Communist Party. In his analysis of Cynicism in the modern period, Foucault refers briefly to the leftism of his time and the French Communist Party after the 1920s. Foucault locates an interesting inversion of the scandal of the revolutionary life in the French Communist Party:

> In the present situation, all forms and styles of life which might have the value of a scandalous manifestation of an unacceptable truth have been banished , but the theme of the style of life nevertheless remains absolutely important in the militantism of the French Communist Party, in the form of the […] inverted injunction to adopt and assert persistently and visibly in one's style of life all the accepted values, all the most customary forms of behavior, and all the most traditional schemas of conduct. So that the scandal of the revolutionary life—as form of life which, breaking with all accepted life, reveals the truth and bears witness to it—is now inverted in these institutional structures of the French Communist Party, [with] the implementation of accepted values, customary behavior, and traditional schemas of conduct, as opposed to bourgeois decadence or leftist madness.[162]

In other words, Foucault understands the structures of the party to have created norms and customary forms of behaviour within which the revolutionary life acquires a 'conformity of existence.'[163] On top of that,

[162] Foucault, *Courage of truth*, 186.
[163] Ibid.

everyone involved adopts persistently and visibly these norms and forms of behaviour, while, for some reason, there is no hope for them to scandalously manifest an unacceptable truth. For Foucault, this situation is paradoxical and worthy of further research. In any case, it provides a short glimpse into this contemporary inversion of Cynicism. People with radical ideas institute a mechanism that overturns (or seeks to overturn) a given institutional order (in this case, capitalism). As soon as this mechanism is instituted, norms and customary behaviours are being developed and adopted persistently, visibly and also hopelessly by the mechanism's participants.

Arguably, something analogous is taking place in the case of Former West and possibly other institutional components of the discursive art world. The blatant manifestation of newly created and adopted norms, behaviours and discursive structures can be drastically exclusionary despite all (honest) intentions for radical inclusion. Furthermore, exposing the conformity of the inverted scandal of the revolutionary life neither subverts nor scandalises its established norms and fails to advance the practice of the Cynic way of life. Perhaps in a rearticulated kind of significational affirmation, complex mediatic mechanisms can decontextualise and recontextualise exposing attempts, render them neutral or play with the distance of their initial intention and their actual effect. Thus, such attempts become spectacularised and, as I will further discuss, the way they function socially depends largely on psychological elements.

The importance of the realm of the psyche in discursive practice has not escaped French-Algerian artist Kader Attia, who, in *Reason's Oxymoron's* (2015), provides a highly insightful interview-based documentary video, that focuses on mental illness in relation to migration and the variety of psychological enunciations and representations in radically different cultural contexts. In 2016, the same artist founded La Colonie (~~La Colonie~~), a space that aspires to be a predominantly discursive zone for the 'decolonialisation not only of peoples but also of knowledge, attitudes and practices.'[164] Albeit less canon-aspiring than Former West, La Colonie is another discursive

[164] 'Biography,' Kader Attia, accessed March 3, 2018, http://kaderattia.de/biography/.

project-institution that might be responding with parrhesia to knowledge and discourse. Besides being a space, La Colonie is also apparently an artistic project, as it appears on the Long List of Visible Award 2018, which 'brings to light and gives strength to artistic actions which have a real capacity to experiment and produce visions that can have impact on the social and cultural imagination of our contemporary world'.[165] As a project-institution, La Colonie's proclaimed agenda is decolonial as opposed to postcolonial. In broad terms, it might be argued that the former approach is relatively more frontal in that it assumes a hands-on process of correction or counter-correction that, in some sense, aims to directly counteract or even undo the corrective or even coercive forces of institutional colonial violence, often perceived as involving technologies of the panopticon. La Colonie discursively directs its potential audience to identify with its struggle immediately through the project title, despite its irony and despite its otherwise claim to 'a trans-cultural, trans-disciplinary and trans-generational approach.'[166] By contrast and despite resonating with similar issues of displacement, the Silent University is less forceful in its presentation of itself and thus disrupts immediate responses, such as the yearning to consume or the compulsion to reject.

Another associated issue is La Colonie's subtle yet discernible aversion to academic discourse which is perceived as solely or obsessively critical, non-propositional or somehow inadequate to the creation of 'a place where everyone can re-appropriate their own space of freedom to think and act as they want to.'[167] Attia implies that this perceived inadequacy of 'academics who work critically on the history of colonisation,' should be compensated by including 'feminists, refugees, architects and activists' as well as 'artists and thinkers working on the Anthropocene' in the (discursive) programme of La Colonie.[168] In an article that announces the opening of La Colonie, Alyssa

[165] 'About,' Visible Project, accessed March 3, 2018, https://www.visibleproject.org/blog/about/.
[166] Kader Attia, 'Biography.'
[167] Kader Attia, 'Re-appropriating the Colony: An Interview With Artist Kader Attia About La Colonie in Paris,' interview by *Cathérine* Hug, *Spike*, January 16, 2017, accessed March 3, 2018, https://www.spikeartmagazine.com/en/articles/re-appropriating-colony
[168] Ibid.

Buffenstein describes the space as committed to 'cross-disciplinary, *anti-academic*, artistic thought and discussion.'[169] This close association of academic thought and discussion with inactive and disciplinarily confined critique is often encountered in the context of cultural practice and it should arguably be problematised. It is indeed likely that this association stems from the experience of exclusionary and disciplinary academic structures. However, the aforementioned parameter of access to or exclusion from the 'eye of power' is not an issue specific to academic structures but the entire (discursive) art world and its institutions. Furthermore, we should be mindful of the process of idealisation in such advocations for non-disciplinary spaces for the fulfillment of self-knowledge away from academic/critical oppression, as if power and discourse could be eradicated. The invocation at stake is often grounded on a supposed psychic or affective freedom and creative or activist self-fulfillment in opposition to an intellectual path to self-knowledge. This assumed opposition goes against a Guattarian perspective of affective knowledge and strips the production of subjectivity from autopoiesis and heterogenesis. Knowledge as a-signification and affect suggests that creative self-fulfillment, or rather, the production of subjectivity, is not opposed to an intellectual path to self-knowledge. Rather, the path to self-knowledge is always affective, even if it is intellectual. Furthermore, the production of subjectivity through autopoiesis and heterogenesis does not seek to usurpe any instance of discourse or signification; rather, it strives towards ontogenetic epistemological and ethico-aesthetic relations, via machinic assemblages of enunciation. From a more Foucauldian perspective, the concept of *epimeleia* clearly postulates the irreducibility of the interrelation between parrhesia, as a specific modality of discourse, and self-inquiry, as the formation of the ethos and the psyche of the subject.

Former West and La Colonie perhaps portray two forms of perversion of Cynicism and its involvement of the psychic or affective aspects. In the former,

[169] Alyssa Buffenstein, 'Kader Attia Opens Hybrid Restaurant and Art Space in Paris: It's called "La Colonie",' *Artnet*, October 18, 2016, accessed March 3, 2018, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/kader-attia-la-colonie-paris-705002 [emphasis added]

the spectacularisation in terms of specific disciplines and intensification of aspiring-to-be parrhesiastic discourse leads to an exacerbation and hyperinflation of the discourse's *pathic* function, to the extent that the scandal of the truth is no longer a scandal or able to alter the currency – at least not beyond the specific disciplines. The currency itself is permeated by its pathic element and the forces that understand this are privileged. These are either forces of private capital or forces that are willing to consider the political implications of this articulation of the currency. Simply using this intuition in order to circulate aspiring-to-be parrhesiastic discourse or, in other words, hype-up critical discourse is, if necessary, by no means a sufficient strategy towards altering the currency. A related perversion takes place in the case of La Colonie, which attempts to do away altogether with the vehicle of critical discourse in favour of an alleged emancipatory alteration of the currency through affective terms. As I have already suggested, it is futile to seek to eradicate discourse or signification. Instituent praxis points to the irreducibilities of a-signification, pre-personal and machinic aspects, rather than their assumed usurpation of everything else.

Therefore, it is important to further examine the conditions of discourse and its formats as they are encountered in various media forms, social media platforms, online fora and comment sections of online media, not least because such conditions end up shaping the current historical political as well as cultural momentum. Perhaps what Foucault observed in relation to the FCP and the Left wing in general was the proto-instances of what currently amounts to an unassuming and hopeless preaching to the converted that becomes a self-absorbed spectacle. Decades after his writings, such instances dominate public discourse and are blatantly developed into online and offline discursive call-outs that even if they genuinely aim at righting wrong they end up caught up in a competitive game of moral self-superiority, which either produces a self-satisfied echo chamber where ideas circulate or intensifies and solidifies the targeted-as-morally-bad behaviour and rarely leads to actual autopoiesis or heterogenesis. At best, this condition appeases sentiments of frustration and guilt that abound due to knowledge-asymmetries and practical

inconsequentiality within (and outwith) otherwise revolutionary edifices. Mark Fisher's aforementioned plea for the ridding of self-loathing and guilt attests to this. Andrew Stewart has upheld in broader terms the need to address 'the part of Left culture that engages in a near-exhibitionist *mea culpa* breast beating routine over their privilege.'[170] Commenting on a major part of leftist discourse that may understandably seek to use their privilege to 'magnify and benefit the voices of those who are oppressed,' he cautions on the potentially alienating effects, arguably due to discursive modalities:

> I certainly accede the need, time, and place for such acknowledgement of privilege. But I also have seen working class women of color feel alienated from the rituals because they come straight from a middle-class guilt complex rather than working class desire to even the playing field.[171]

I do not attempt here to determine the appropriateness of specific emancipatory strategies. Rather, at stake are the mechanisms that radically condition contemporary discourse and can by extension be detrimental or beneficial to both emancipatory and repressive or exclusionary strategies.

The overall crucial ambiguity is the extent to which the enunciators of contemporary discourse that aspires to alter the currency (at least with honest intentions) are in control of or even conscious of the ethical and political problems at stake. This extent of course directly relates with knowledge/power asymmetries that in practice weight on corporate power as well as high-ranking bureaucratic and elected policy-makers. But the nature of the ambiguity rests on the conditions and parameters of discourse. In his analysis on the online discourse around the 2016 EU referendum and US election, media analyst Jamie Bartlett stresses the role of psychoanalytic parameters in the shaping of 'beliefs' through 'debate.'[172] He observes that such parameters tend to obstruct the reformulation of one's opinion through discourse, unless the discourse

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[170] Andrew Stewart, '*Kill all Normies* is an Awful Book', *Counterpunch*, 30 August 2017, accessed March 12, 2018, https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/08/30/kill-all-normies-is-an-awful-book/.
[171] Stewart, 'Awful Book.'
[172] Jamie Bartlett, *The People vs Tech: How the Internet is Killing Democracy (and how We Save It)* (London: Ebury Press, 2018), 58.

takes the form of ‘a slow and laborious process’ that accommodates ‘arguments that are carefully made, detailed and involve an understanding of other people’s mindset or background.’[173] He notes that this kind of discourse is rarely encountered in ‘digital communication’ wherein ‘interaction with rivals or opponents is typically swift, fleeting and emotionally heightened.’[174] Bartlett also refers to the psychological mechanisms at play in the algorithmic structure of social media that create ‘small tribes’ on the internet and sets them at war.[175] This viewpoint directly reflects the aforementioned dangers that pertain to phenomena of overidentification in relation to publics. Indeed, publics as tribes at war are even more prone to become market segments, as the hugely profit-making psychographics advertising industry based on big data suggests. Relatedly, Bartlett underscores two tendencies that might be seen as paving the way for fascism or other authoritarian-exclusionary forms: the general desire for ‘swift, immediate and total answers,’ such as constructing and blaming other social groups, and a ‘sense of tribal belonging in a digital world, characterised by confusion, uncertainty and information overload.’[176]

What should arguably be accentuated is the pivotal importance of the underlying psychological or psychosocial aspects of discourse that traditionally go unnoticed or as of minimal influence to the rational and linear significatory mechanisms operative within the discourse. Guattari’s specifications on a non-discursive, pathic, machinic, a-significational and pre-personal relevance could not be more pertinent here and of course, the corporations that atomise, customise and exploit this relevance for economic profit are well aware of it. Considering instituent praxis (i.e. the conscious co-production of rules of law as new significations) in the remit of discursive practices ensures that the collective past or unconscious – from which these significations arise and which crucially involves a-significatory, pathic, pre-personal and proto-subjective realms – are not depreciated or sidestepped in favour of rational or

[173] Bartlett, *The People vs Tech*, 59.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid., 64-65.

linear discursivity and signification. The production of rules of law should in no way cast such realms of subjectivity as of lower importance; instituent praxis rejects the binarity comprising on the one hand, rules of law made of linear significations and on the other, irrational psychic forces. Signification in instituent praxis should arguably be theorised close to enunciation as the function of a-significatory, pathic and desiring machinic assemblages, if it is to operate (conceptually) in creation-relevant fields, from algorithmic, administrative and judicial to socioeconomic, political and aesthetic.

A key issue that remains to be fully addressed is the parameter of access to or exclusion from the eye of power. In terms of the discursive art world, this parameter can be seen as expressible through another permutation of a panopticon/panorama complex, one grounded on a transitive and hypertextual discursivity. The university-projects already hint at this parameter as, to various extents, they sought to work towards archival outputs based on their discursive, process-based work in the form of archival publications, or documentation material accessible online (in the case of the Silent University). The content produced since 2008 in the context of Former West can be publicly accessed online in its entirety (mostly in video form). The possible funding reasons (or absence thereof) that prescribe or perpetuate this archival tendency is secondary to the observation that it is mostly intended to enlarge access to the output of the projects. In what follows, I examine further the perpetuation of power structures within the discursive art world and its complex relation to issues of access.

Access / Ràdio Web MACBA

Foucault refers to Cynicism as a popular practice and a popular philosophy whose 'precise and particular places' are 'the streets' and 'the doors of the temple.'[177] He asserts that Cynicism's 'discourses and interventions were

[177] Foucault, *Courage of Truth*, 204.

addressed to a wide and consequently not very cultured public, and its recruits came from outside the educated elites who usually practiced philosophy.'[178] Foucault also identifies a circular relation between Cynicism's 'doctrinal thinness' and 'popular recruitment.'[179] Cynicism was a popular philosophy with a banal and poor theoretical doctrine. However, Cynicism's doctrinal thinness had to do with the paramount importance of the use of *askesis* (exercise/practice) as learning method rather than the 'relatively easy' and 'lengthy' way of *logos* (discourse).[180] In today's dominant conditions of discourse that include large parts of the discursive art world, Foucault's insight is once again perverted. Far from allowing *askesis*, doctrinal thinness accommodates and legitimates easy discursive shortcuts, unexercised to the mechanisms that prey on them.

In the context of the discursive art world, the issue of doctrinal thinness or theoretical or other complexity relates with practical expressions of popular recruitment or access. As Morgan Quaintance's account in Chapter 3 would merely reiterate, access continues to be a majorly unresolved issue in the (discursive) art world. In referring to projects such as free universities in Beuys's tradition that use 'art as a space for informal educational initiatives,' artist, author, and curator Marion von Osten has suggested that they cannot 'provide accessibility for more than the very few' as they 'operate in the symbolic, heavily-under financed space of the art world.'[181] In his famous study *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public*, first published in 1969, Pierre Bourdieu suggests that working-class museum visitors tend to prefer their visits to be guided.[182] Guidance involves 'the help of a guide or a friend,' the visit being 'signposted with arrows,' and the art works being

[178] Ibid., 202.
[179] Ibid., 204.
[180] Ibid., 207.
[181] Marion von Osten and Eva Egermann, 'Twist and Shout: On Free Universities, Educational Reforms and Twists and Turns Inside and Outside the Art World,' in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010), 282.
[182] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 49.

'supplemented by explanatory panels.'[183] Bourdieu observes that 'working class visitors occasionally see, in the absence of any information which might make their visit easier, evidence of a desire to exclude through esotericism, or if not, as the more cultivated visitors are more willing to suggest, a commercial intent (in other words to promote the sale of catalogues).'[184] Bourdieu also notes that 'hostility towards efforts to make works of art more accessible is mostly encountered amongst members of the cultivated class' while 'working-class visitors are well placed to appreciate that the love of art is not love at first sight but is born of long familiarity.'[185]

These findings might need to be complicated today given the advent of the populist mega-museum, which involves consumer satisfaction measurement systems and quantifiable targets of accessibility. Yet, writing over thirty years after Bourdieu, Andrea Fraser is not convinced by the efficiency of such system to attract working class audiences:

> […] the enormous expansion of museum audiences, celebrated under the banner of populism, has proceeded hand in hand with the continuous rise of entrance fees, excluding more and more lower-income visitors, and the creation of new forms of elite participation with increasingly differentiated hierarchies of membership, viewings, and galas, the exclusivity of which is broadly advertised in fashion magazines and society pages. Far from becoming less elitist, ever-more-popular museums have become vehicles for the mass-marketing of elite tastes and practices that, while perhaps less rarified in terms of the aesthetic competencies they demand, are ever more rarified economically as prices rise.[186]

To what extent would it be adequate to aim at an art institutional paradigm that would abolish elitist and exclusive forms of art distribution, consumption and participation, if its required aesthetic competencies remained less rarified? Is there even a way of cleanly differentiating and disassociating the extended art-world practice that involves curatorial, discursive, managerial, organisational,

[183] Bourdieu, *Love of Art*, 49.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid., 53-54.
[186] Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions,' 132

administrative practice from its economic administration, the former being only aesthetically valued and the latter only economically? An empirical and practical answer to this question would require volumes of further research and would divert from the issue in question which pertains more broadly to access. In terms of theory, however, Rogoff has drawn a pertinent distinction between access and accessibility, the latter instrumentalising the former and aiming at consumption 'rather than experience.'[187] Rogoff understands accessibility as 'the model of a client-based relationship with consumers who know what they want and can evaluate their satisfaction from it.'[188] For Rogoff, accessibility in such terms implies 'entry points that assume a fully completed entity that can be entered frontally.'[189] Importantly, Rogoff also associates accessibility with an understanding of inclusion as 'necessarily' reliant on cultural representation through 'identity groups'.[190] However, she does not quite reject accessibility in the name of an authorial freedom to create undisturbed by institutional bureaucracy and marketing strategies.[191] Rather, in line with her remarks that all constituencies of the art world ultimately morph into a huge conversation, she argues that by insisting on models centered upon accessibility, 'the possibility of shifting paradigms through and within the work as jointly experienced by makers, displayers and viewers is entirely lost.'[192] Rogoff attempts instead to theorise a notion of access that preserves this possibility of joint experience away from accessibility and the enforcement of 'complexity'-free programming and knowledge as consumable content.[193] Her idea of access in 'the museum' as much as in 'spaces of learning' is based on the importance of one's simple 'being-there,' without specified agendas, allowed to inhabit, 'fail' and experience various encounters beyond the

[187] Rogoff, 'On Being Serious,' 71.
[188] Ibid., 71-72.
[189] Ibid., 72.
[190] Ibid., 71.
[191] Ibid., 72.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.

confirmation of identity, such as the 'unexpected, the speculative, the seductive.'[194]

In the context of the discursive art world, it could be argued that a key parameter could be found in Bourdieu's term 'long familiarity,' i.e., knowledge understood less as a body of knowledge (content) than as being with and around art and participating in art-related discussions. Bourdieu has identified a crucial function in museum guidance tools that should be extended to spaces of art discourse: '[guidance tools] would proclaim, simply by existing, the right to be uninformed, the right to be there and uninformed, and the right of uninformed people to be there.'[195] In some respects, Former West's openly accessible online archive could be seen as suggestive of the right to be accessed and attended by uninformed users. However, it is likely that despite Former West's praise of participation and its attempt to understand knowledge as informal and co-produced, the 'esotericism' of its discourse is blatant and cannot but appear exclusionary to those unfamiliar with art-world discourse.

Perhaps a counter example can be found in the discursive art-world project/institution Ràdio Web MACBA, the online radio of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona that is fully grounded on online accessible archives. The project/institution was initiated in 2006 as an archival outlet accompanying the exhibition programme of the museum, but later grew to also produce and curate a podcast-based selection independent of the exhibitions. Available podcasts range from interviews with philosophers, educators, artists and curators to sound and radio art, experimental music, audio archives and documentaries and music related features. The radio project is non-profit and partly funded by Creative Europe's programme Re-imagine Europe, a four-year collaboration that joins ten cultural organisations with artists and audiences across nine European countries. The radio project explicitly operates in the realm of 'popular education,' which suggests that it is

[194] Ibid., 72-74.
[195] Bourdieu, *Love of Art*, 49.

addressed at wide audiences that might not be familiar with art or art-world discourse.

Institutional endeavours that both aim at a popular education and wide outreach without compromising their aesthetics or left-wing politics are indeed rare occasions. Unlike La Colonie and despite aiming at popular education, the radio project does not shun critical intellectual discourse or theoretical deliberation. Unlike both Former West and La Colonie, Ràdio Web MACBA does not explicitly posit a specific emancipatory or power-exposing agenda. This could be associable with aspects of the museum panorama, as the project's attachment to MACBA might be indicating; in not explicitly addressing specific audiences or publics, the project resembles the open-to-all spirit of the museum for the rising middle classes. However, as I have suggested, preserving aspects of the panoramic access to the eye of power hardly counters oppression, social inequality or power asymmetries within an institutional landscape.

Conclusions

Referring more broadly to art-world (discursive) institutions, issues of access to the discursive and institutional infrastructure should be of utmost importance. Such infrastructure shapes decisively more visible structures, while it remains typically invisible to both audiences and lower-level cultural workers. In an internally circulated report commissioned and partly funded by Creative Scotland to the collaborative arts/media project Variant, Gesa Helms, Leigh French, Lisa Bradley and the Variant Editorial Group present the outcomes of a two-year empirical research into 'forms and practices of communication, principally within the contemporary visual arts of Scotland's cultural sector.'[196] In this report, the authors identify a problem that is arguably

[196] Gesa Helms, Leigh French, Lisa Bradley and the Variant Editorial Group, 'Divergence and agonism: the different, the other and the one who disagrees; Cultural communication and democracy in Scotland', report commissioned by Creative Scotland, March 2016, 2. The report is no longer available to the public but the authors have authorised its use in this thesis.

beyond the European (semi-)periphery of Scotland, namely, that 'fear over loss of network access motivates against voicing opinion that is not supportive of the dominant perspectives of cultural and political power.'[197] The authors maintain that 'in order to pursue personal advancement and avoid any potential negative evaluation that could restrict access, one in effect becomes obliged to perform and so internalise modes of strategic self-presentation or impression management.'[198] The detrimental effect of this condition is that despite the abundance or general increase of public discursive programming, there is an alarming absence of 'agonistic public debate' regarding 'policy processes (the means by which policy objectives and approaches are identified, selected and implemented).'[199] Thus, according to the report, what could otherwise constitute a 'key space of the production and enactment of cultural democracy' is reduced to 'personal, private and informal forms of exchange' largely in terms of 'sharing or protecting secrets, gossip or tittle-tattle (often being awarded a respective moral judgement).'[200] Thus, workers that are only precariously positioned in the art world or those who have not yet accessed it have scarce options beyond strategies of compliant personal advancement. What is reflected here is the personal or institutional-as-private persistence of power relations, which are largely unquantifiable, publicly unaccountable and permeable by social inequalities. This condition is to the detriment of any potential audience or (counter)public formation around art institutions or an art community conceived in the widest possible sense, unless there is a switch from diffused power relations to instituent praxis. Such praxis would not suffice as mere implementation of legislation/regulation against unofficial power relations and socially conditioned privilege, even though this is also necessary. Instituent praxis would have to centrally contain – in its creative function – aspects of a-signification and desire, in terms of producing

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Creative Scotland is 'the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland'. See: 'What We Do,' Creative Scotland, accessed October 4, 2018, https://www.creativescotland.com/what-we-do.

[197] Helms, French, Bradley, 'Divergence and agonism,' 11.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Ibid., 12.

[200] Ibid.

a collective subjectivity. In this, power relations are not magically cancelled out or bracketed off. Instituent praxis becomes an attempt not to accept the conscious and unconscious relations and sedimentations of diffused power as quintessential. It is a matter of collectively becoming conscious of such relations, registering and documenting them and enunciating a heterogenetic code.

Speaking relative truth to power is not enough to alter the currency in a non-explicitly tyrannical yet oppressive context, which is perpetuated by the capitalist and monopolistic channeling of asignification via the linguistic signifier and experienced subconsciously and transitively as much as concretely. The conditions of public discourse today conduce to a mutilating shift in the function of parrhesia: from a form of practical learning or askesis that proceeds by self-inquiry, investigation, testing and care for the self, to a competitive, personified, individualised or identitarian power game show, whereby the winners expose the most scandalous truth and the losers are revealed to have failed to adequately conjoin rational discourse with their way of living within the social. Meanwhile, the process of learning is reduced to reality spectacles and any exposed personalised truth hardly alters the currency, apart from shifts approved by capital or, at best, regulatory and/or (nominally) public institutions.

Instituent praxis postulates configurations that would go beyond a presumed power symmetry through equal access to the *viewpoint* of power, even if this was achievable. The posited praxis exceeds power at least in its explicit forms in setting out to create or *co-produce* the currency, through the conscious co-production of new significations that aspire to become rules of law. At the same time, even if this refers to the conscious praxis that disalienates the group from its own internal code, the involved subjectivity-in-the-making cannot but be produced in and through affective knowledge and the psychic implications within it. These are, however, domains where power can be intrinsic. Far from abolishable, then, power could be seen as either the limit of instituent praxis or, at best, its push. Foucault pre-empts this in his assertion that power

relations should be studied as the procedures by which people's conduct is governed, rather than as an emanation of a substantial and invasive power. He also sees the possibility of *resistance* in the same planes, relations and fluxes in terms of subjectivity, desire and discourse. Such terrains could, however, be more productively framed through the Guattarian nexus of the artificial real.

The subjectivity involved in instituent praxis exceeds notions of counter-publics, insofar as the latter ultimately rest on concrete needs or interests, commonality or a common good. The problem with such aspects is that they are easily appropriable by the identificatory mechanisms of the market including spectacularisation, which limit emancipation and intersectionality, according to whatever capital allows for. The advantage of the political principle of the common through instituent praxis is that unappropriability is postulated as artificially instituted, on the grounds of co-operation and co-obligation and through a non-pre-existing subjectivity which can go beyond commonality as identification.

Despite their democratising or parrhesiastic intentions, formats, structures and project-institutions in the discursive art world hardly constitute a democratic front, insofar as they subscribe to the curatorial/exhibitionary context, which at best offers access to the eye of power, and at worst, turns into a franchise, blueprint or empty signifier for democracy. The fetishisation of such formulaic concerns facilitates the unhindered performance of progression in the art world and can obfuscate ongoing exclusions and alienations. Nonetheless, beyond such fetishisation, instituent praxis resonates with the quest for institutionally experimental forms that are socially responsive in their geopolitical context and faithful to a non-defeatist, desire-fueled and subjectivity-forming conception of the real as artificial. The next chapter explores this in relation to art institutions in Europe's semi-periphery.

5. Art-Institutional Experimentation in Europe's Semi-Periphery

Introduction

This chapter furthers the discourse around art institutional experimentation in a European framework and critically examines geopolitical gaps that arise in historiographical attempts. The proliferation of public or non-profit, small-scale or medium-scale art institutions in the contemporary period is not irrelevant to the rise of this discourse, which has, however, attempted to look for and theorise beyond quantity experimental or alternative institutional/curatorial modalities. The current of the so-called New Institutionalism (NI henceforth) that emerged in 2000s in Europe has been central in such discourse. In my analysis, I use this current as merely a starting point in order to discuss the conditions for the emergence of experimental institutions in the European region, through an approach accordant with what is institutionally at stake today. I employ tactically the geopolitical concept of semi-periphery, in order to frame tensions between cores and peripheries, beyond sedimented socio-political power landscapes and according to dynamic idiosyncrasies posed by instituent praxis and shifting realities in contemporary Europe. This focus should not obfuscate the discursive and practical experimentation with alternative or non-dominant art institutional settings that preceded the contemporary period and exceeded the confinement of a western-centric canon. It hopes instead to facilitate methodological links with further research of a widened and decentralised scope.

The term 'New Institutionalism' was coined by Jonas Ekeberg in an homonymous publication as part of the Norwegian series *Verksted* (2003).[1] NI is associated mainly – yet not exclusively – with a selection of art institutions

[1] Jonas Ekeberg, ed., *New Institutionalism*, Verksted, no. 1 (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003)

in Northern and Central-Western Europe. Widely referenced are Witte de With in Amsterdam, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Rooseum in Malmo, Platform Garanti in Istanbul, Kunstverein München, Bergen Kunsthall and the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) in Helsinki. Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger have concisely described NI as

> a series of curatorial, art educational as well as administrative practices that from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s endeavored to reorganize the structures of mostly medium-sized, publicly funded contemporary art institutions, and to define alternative forms of institutional activity.[2]

Curator and central figure of NI Charles Esche's now-famous phrase 'part community centre, part laboratory and part academy, with less need for the established showroom function' describes quite accurately what these art institutions aspired to be.[3] Their visions explicitly renounced the standard characteristics of mainstream exhibition spaces (mega-halls, populist and tourist-oriented programming, as well as austere, plain white cubes) in favour of increased participation and public engagement, social sensitivity to the local context, educational focus and a general flow of experimentation and democratisation across activities. Finally, despite its emphasis on curatorial/institutional decisions, NI allegedly facilitated *artistic* production. Notably, curator and director of Kunstverein München from 2002 to 2004 Maria Lind has asserted a broader responsiveness to 'the lead of art and artists to think about how an institution could be more sensitive to them, to be in the service of and in an interesting dialogue with artists.'[4]

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[2] Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited,' in '(New) Institution(alism),' ed. Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, *Oncurating.org.*, no. 21 (December 2013): 6, accessed November 2, 2014, http://www.on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/issue-21/PDF_to_Download/ONCURATING_Issue21_A4.pdf.

[3] Charles Esche, 'What's the Point of Art Centres Anyway? Possibility, Art and Democratic Deviance,' *Republicart*, April 2004, accessed November 7, 2014, http://republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01_en.htm.

[4] Maria Lind, '"We Want to Become an Institution": An Interview with Maria Lind,' in '(New) Institution(alism),' ed. Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger, *Oncurating.org,* no. 21 (December 2013): 30, accessed November 2, 2014, http://www.on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/issue-21/PDF_to_Download/ONCURATING_Issue21_A4.pdf.

NI's historicisation has been heavily dependent on a curatorially specific discourse produced predominantly by practising curators that ponder on their own or their peers' work within specific institutions. By extension, most of the aforementioned art institutions are typically discussed as examples of NI specifically under the directorship of particular curators. Vicky Chainey Gagnon has noted that NI was a 'loose association of *individuals*—many of whom were former independent curators and had recently become directors of art institutions and museums — who chose no predetermined program of action.'[5]

Yet, some of the implicated curators (such as Nina Möntmann, curator at NIFCA from 2003 to 2006) have denounced the indexical effect generated by the invention of an umbrella term for certain actions, especially when there is not enough 'temporal distance'.[6] Indeed, ten years after the *Verksted* issue on NI, Ekeberg himself acknowledges that he introduced NI 'rather offhandedly' as a concept.[7] However, he responds to relevant criticism by arguing that 'even though the term might be rejected, the discussion on NI was a welcome opportunity to focus on the relation between artistic production, public institutions and social change'.[8] All in all, NI concentrates a set of traits and visions that some institutions in Europe seemed to share, regardless of whether NI should be used as an umbrella term.

NI strategies incorporate a critical stance towards the dominance of the exhibition form and experiment with ways of encountering art other than the showroom. As many aforementioned examples in this thesis would suggest, this stance is not new to the fields of either art or curating. Relatedly, Gagnon also references the practice of Group Material (active from 1979 to 1996) who

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[5] Vicky C. Gagnon, 'From the Populist Museum to the Research Platform: New Art Exhibition Practices Today,' *ETC*, no. 95 (Feb/May 2012): 32, accessed November 3, 2014, https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/65948ac. [emphasis added].

[6] Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger cite personal conversation with Nina Möntmann in Kolb and Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited,' 8.

[7] Jonas Ekeberg, 'Institutional Experiments Between Aesthetics and Activism,' in *Self-Organised*, ed. Steine Hebert and Anne Szefer Karlsen (London: Open Editions; Bergen: Hordaland Art Centre, 2013), 51.

[8] Ekeberg, 'Institutional Experiments,' 53.

experimented with more democratic exhibition (or non-exhibition) forms, heavily loaded with roundtables and other pedagogical and educational formats –including their groundbreaking exhibition *Democracy* (1988-89) at the Dia Art Foundation in New York.[9] In the *Verksted* publication, Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt traces NI's experimental and exhibition-skeptic momentum into previously DIY artistic production. She argues that in the 1990s, NI endeavoured to incorporate the already thriving – at least in the United Kingdom – Do It Yourself (DIY) ethos of artist-led and artist-run projects and initiatives, gradually undermining their political claim to self-organisation 'outside the officially sanctioned institutions'.[10] Gordon Nesbitt refers to the persisting gap between artistic and institutional practice whereby the latter ascended at the expense of the former, despite the proclaimed central position artists occupied in the context of NI.[11] The general idea is that artists receive only a fraction of whatever financial resources are available. Funding is more easily and directly absorbed by the mediating institutional infrastructure, whose expenditure involves or even prioritises costs of institutional maintenance over direct investment in art production.[12] In the case of NI, Gordon Nesbitt suggests that the relatively small institutions had to also deal with 'budget shortages,' curbing even further the resources available to artists.[13] She also cautions against the centralisation and concentration of power observable in regions where specific art institutions 'can be seen as having usurped some of the traditional territory of artist-led initiatives.'[14]

However, Gordon Nesbitt's critique reproduces the inside/outside dichotomy regarding the institution, which leads to no fruitful questions or conclusions for reasons I have addressed in previous chapters. Even if a hierarchy between art and art institution manifested clearly within the specific spatial and temporal conditions that Gordon Nesbitt comments on, it would be problematised by the

[9] Gagnon, 'Populist Museum,' 33.
[10] Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, 'Harnessing the Means of Production,' in *New Institutionalism*, ed. Jonas Ekeberg, Verksted, no.1 (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003), 84.
[11] Gordon Nesbitt, 'Harnessing,' 85.
[12] Ibid., 81, 85.
[13] Ibid., 81.
[14] Ibid., 79.

current European (UK-included) condition of neoliberal austerity that enmeshes art institutions in a survival struggle, already apparent with NI's decline in the late 2000s. Arguably, it would be theoretically unsustainable not to conceive of artist-run initiatives and projects themselves as art institutions. Even if a differentiation has to be made between publicly funded institutions and more temporary DIY or artist-run initiatives, I would argue as per Mouffe that singleheartedly favouring withdrawal from established institutions is a problematic strategy and nurtures a limiting either/or condition. The vision and desire of NI to abstain from the sphere of mainstream, neoliberal, populist institutions and to experiment with new formats went hand-in-hand with a persistent self-interrogation. It is this experimentation with an institution's institutional 'being', as it were, that I will uphold and focus on, in terms of some of its forms, limitations and versatile dynamics across parts of the European region that are seen as semi-peripheral.

New Institutionalism and the semi-periphery

The discourse on NI and the relevant curatorial/discursive activity have dealt unevenly with the geographic delineations of such institutionally experimental dynamics in the region. Ekeberg has registered the viewpoint that NI was predominantly a northern European phenomenon in the assumption that in the 1980s and 1990s social democracy and the welfare state were not undermined despite the advent of neoliberalism, allowing for ample public funding for art institutions. However, Ekeberg seems to challenge this viewpoint not only in the *Verksted* publication (2003) where he refers to Platform Garanti in Istanbul (under the directorship of internationally acclaimed curator Vasif Kortun between 2001 and 2007) as a core part of NI, but also in the *Self-organised* publication in 2013, where he makes a case of MACBA in Barcelona demonstrating 'already since before it opened in 1995' a proclivity to activist urgencies in a 'similar approach' to the Rooseum and NIFCA. Furthermore, while the discourse on NI had just emerged, its practising curatorial counterpart was already to some extent preoccupied with exploring its

common ground with institutional experimentations outside the dominant metropolitan centers of contemporary art in Europe and the regions that still enjoyed the benefits of social democracy. For instance, *Institution2* a long-term exhibition and series of seminars curated by Jens Hoffmann and organised by NIFCA (2003-2004) aimed at exploring 'different examples of institutional work from various cultural and geographic contexts that manifest a flexible and progressive approach to a critical engagement with art and the exchange with the public.'[15] Platform Garanti in Istanbul, Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius and Foksal Gallery Foundation in Warsaw were among the 10 participating art institutions, most of which located in Northwest Europe.

However, such instances seem to be more informed by the desire to include and network with more peripheral areas without shifting the main protagonists, rather than sustained research into other European areas that might portray similar or equivalent institutional experimentation. This could be attested by the direct association of NI's decline with the Nordic context, bestowing the latter with an element of origin and dominance within NI as a whole. Ekeberg suggests that the decline of NI is signaled by the closure of the Rooseum in 2006 and NIFCA in 2007, as 'the advantageous conditions created by social democratic cultural policies and neoliberal governmental reforms hit the Scandinavian countries.'[16] In Möntmann's account that includes Baltic and other Northern European examples, there were budget cuts, tightening of the demands in programming, changes in directors, and institutions becoming branches of well-established museums or other cultural institutions.[17] Möntmann characteristically writes: 'most of the institutions seem to have been put in their place like insubordinate teenagers.'[18] What she implies is that

[15] See 'Art Institutions: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Working with Contemporary Art,' NIFCA and Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, *E-flux Announcements*, November 26, 2003, accessed January 23, 2018, https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/42916/art-institutions-the-ethics-and-aesthetics-of-working-with-contemporary-art/.
[16] Ekeberg, 'Institutional Experiments,' 59. Finland is technically considered Nordic rather than Scandinavian.
[17] Nina Möntmann, 'The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future,' in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (London: MayFly, 2009), 156.
[18] Möntmann, 'The Rise and Fall,' 156.

'criticality' is no longer tolerated by funders and other supporting institutions that have fully internalised a 'corporate' logic.

For Möntmann, the fall of NI indicates an 'urgent need for emancipatory forms of action in the institutionalized art field and thus for new institutions'.[19] Indicatively, she refers to examples of community projects in three Indian cities (Delhi, Mumbai and Jakarta) whose activity is 'participatory', 'institution-forming' and of a 'quasi-institutional status.' These are initiatives by people in the art field who start working together, in a small space (often used for 'other community activities such as discussions and parties') and the programming is often the work of friends and art peers.[20] Möntmann sees an expansion of such activity, as those involved 'fundraise internationally', 'invite foreign curators and artists, organize film programs, edit magazines and so on.'[21] Some of the characteristics of the local context that give rise to such activities are relatively fewer 'institutional infrastructures', lack of access to them, 'few official contemporary institutions' and no easy access to private and public funding.[22] By contrast, Möntmann asserts, 'institutions in Western countries need to reduce the number of structures and standards, and disengage spaces from too many codes and contexts'.[23] In the West 'alternatives are always measured against the official system that already exists and is increasingly defined by the politics of city marketing and sponsorship'.[24]

Möntmann recognises that western alternatives (and presumably those in the Global North) are measured against an official or mainstream system and yet does not go as far as examining *how* the supposed eastern/southern alternatives are in turn measured against the western/northern mainstream and alternative structures. In this, there is the danger of idealising the creative practice that takes place *despite* the problems and obstacles created by the lack of infrastructural and institutional access, as well as perpetuating the

[19] Ibid., 157.
[20] Ibid., 158.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 157-58.
[23] Ibid., 158.
[24] Ibid.

assumption that there is no future potentiality for (access to) institutional infrastructure in the contexts of such practice.

As the discourse and curatorial activity that focused on experimental art institutions globally grew and to a great extent moved away from NI, examples from more peripheral areas became increasingly apparent. In the conference 'Desire Lines: A Symposium on Experimental Institutional Formats' at David Roberts Arts Foundation (DRAF) in London in 2014, some of the participating institutions were 98weeks in Beirut, Beirut in Cairo and Kunsthalle Lissabon in Lisbon.[25] The articles 'Et in Arcadia ego: A Project for a Ubiquitous Kunsthalle' by Filipa Ramos, referring to 'the Most Beautiful Kunsthalle in the World' project by Fondazione Antonio Ratti in Como, 'The Hidden Law of a Probable Outcome: On the Development of a Southern Kunsthalle' by João Mourão and Luís Silva, referring to Kunsthalle Lissabon in *South as a State of Mind*, as well as the column 'Off-spaces' in the magazine *Art Review* have also focused on experimental or alternative institutions in relatively peripheral areas.[26]

In some respects, my cases studies in this chapter respond and seek to contribute to a similar discourse that focuses on the European terrain, while remaining aware of the danger of a tokenistic approach that reserves a peripheral space for peripheral institutions or even a celebratory sentiment towards the occasional off-space that makes it into the mainstream, Northwest-led discourse, without really addressing more structural problems. One such problem is that in the case of western liberal institutions, the *historical context* of each respective institution is largely known or more visible and discussed, whereas when it comes to peripheral institutions, their

[25] Other participating institutions were PRAXES in Berlin (DE) and Rongwrong in Amsterdam (NL). The conference was co-organised with European Kunsthalle, a largely nomadic project initiated in 2002 in Cologne that experimented with and explored the Kunsthalle as a curatorial form, and Goldsmiths MFA Curating.

[26] Filipa Ramos, 'Et in Arcadia ego: A project for a ubiquitous Kunsthalle,' *South as a State of Mind* (Winter/Spring 2013): 46-50.
João Mourão and Luís Silva, 'The Hidden Law of a Probable Outcome: On the Development of a Southern Kunsthalle,' *South as a State of Mind* (Summer 2012): 74-76.
Oliver Basciano, 'Off-Space no 13: Jerusalem, on the road,' *Art Review* (Summer 2013) accessed December 15, 2014, http://artreview.com/opinion/off-space_no_13_jerusalem/.

historical context is not simply more obscure but is also stereotypically presupposed. Even though there is truth to divisions between centres and peripheries in Europe, disambiguation is necessary on a few key aspects, as well as further specification on the modality of the mechanisms that condition and maintain notions and functions of periphery.

Kolb and Flückiger have suggested that NI's

> failure cannot be explained entirely with reference to hegemonial political conditions, but that institutions as agents did not manage to constitute or mobilize the (sub-)publics necessary to oppose the closure of an institution under political pressure, and which might by their very existence legitimate the direction of the program.[27]

This comment relates to aspects of the art institution that I have discussed in previous chapters. It is its underlying pertinence to aspects of instituent praxis that I want to focus on; the issue of producing publics, or rather, collective subjectivity, while co-producing rules of law as new significations conditioned by one's own (phantasmatic) past. As the institutional exceeds the economic, the narrative of an economic hierarchy that corresponds linearly to an (art) institutional one does not adequately describe the implicated functions. Taking this remainder into consideration, I will employ the concept of semi-periphery, as imported from the social sciences into geopolitical discourses of the art world, to address the dynamics of some key driving forces operative among unequal segments in the European region.

Immanuel Wallerstein has used the term semi-periphery to refer to countries that are classified in between the 'core' and the 'peripheral' countries, as regards the profitability, diversification, technological development and wage capacity of production.[28] Wallerstein suggests that the semi-peripheral countries operate as core countries for the peripheral ones and as peripheral for the core ones, in multiple and complex ways.[29] In 1976, when globalisation

[27] Kolb and Flückiger, 'New Institutionalism Revisited,' 13-14.
[28] Immanuel Wallerstein. 'Semi-Peripheral Countries and the Contemporary World Crisis.' *Theory and Society* 3, no. 4 (1976): 462, accessed May 3, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/656810.
[29] Wallerstein, 'Semi-Peripheral Countries,' 463.

was nascent at best, Wallerstein classified the Southern European region comprising Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal, the Eastern tier as well as Norway and Finland as semi-peripheral.[30] Three of the southern countries would not join the European Economic Community until 1981 (Greece) and 1987 (Spain and Portugal) and of course, the Eastern tier comprised largely so-called socialist states, 'that is, those with governments ruled by a Marxist-Leninist party, which has nationalized the basic means of production.'[31] In developing the literature on semi-periphery, Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall have articulated a clear institutional pertinence: 'the semi-periphery includes […] regions in which institutional features are in intermediate form in between those forms found in adjacent core and peripheral areas.'[32] In the publication *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, the Polish cultural researcher Ewa Majewska has discussed the currency of the semi-periphery today in describing 'those countries that are seduced and disciplined to perhaps one day join the West.'[33] In this, she discerns a 'semi-colonial dependency' which is battled in vain, especially when it lacks 'the spoils of colonial accumulation.'[34] Majewska argues that the post-socialist condition has left Eastern Europe with the exacerbation of social inequality due to a 'hyper-exploitative neoliberalism,' while the western dominant narrative that primarily upholds the Eastern democratic deficit has 'been internalized, and finds expression in self-depreciation, guilt, and inferiority complexes, only encouraging populations of the East to make authoritarian political choices.'[35] Majewska notes that the harshness of experiences in Eastern Europe had been unthinkable to the West until the fiscal and debt crisis in Greece.[36] In 2011, soon after the Greek crisis had

[30] Ibid., 465.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall, *Rise and Demise: Comparing World-Systems* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 78.
[33] Ewa Majewska, 'Peripheries, Housewives, and Artists in Revolt: Notes from the "Former East",' in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 602-3.
[34] Majewska, 'Peripheries, Housewives,' 603.
[35] Ibid., 602.
[36] Ibid., 603.

erupted and in the aftermath of the global financial crisis (2008), Angela Dimitrakaki argued, that the whole of Europe (not just the part of the continent identified as 'Eastern') is in a post–socialist condition, in the sense of Europe being in transition to a new stage in capitalism.[37] However, there are still internal conflicts and imbalances, and even new and emergent ones – with the North/South division being central, as also Dimitrakaki notes.[38]

Through these viewpoints, I hope to screenshot some of the shifting dynamics in European geopolitics while accentuating the semi-peripheral condition as a process of concurrency between complex mechanisms of desire and legitimisation. There is a constant negotiation over what comes to be acknowledged as the sovereign desire of the semi-periphery, through processes of legitimation, pacts and deals. Institutional creativity occupies an increasingly important role in this process, which should be measured through instituent praxis, i.e., the *co-production* of new significations as rules of law. The terms of the negotiation are largely (perceived as) dictated by the core centres (including the semi-peripheries that function as centres to the peripheries). However, the condition of the semi-periphery involves perversion; the semi-colonial dependence is desired by the semi-periphery that hopes to gain access to the core status, while it is often the frustration of this desire rather than the factuality of any given socioeconomic dependence that spearheads nationalism, authoritarianism and the reproduction of forced dependencies. As the ironic Greek-based Facebook page the Institute for the Management of the Athenian Post-Documenta Melancholy (or IDAMM) which I present in detail in Chapter 6 would suggest, accusations around neo-colonialism towards Documenta 14 were inscribed in such frustration, even as socioeconomic factuality is also present and active.

Perhaps a more substantiated criticism towards NI (as discourse and practice) than its alleged compromise of the institutionally critical potential attained by

[37] Angela Dimitrakaki, 'Feminist Politics and Institutional Critiques: Imagining a Curatorial Commons,' in *Working with Feminism: Curating and Exhibitions in Eastern Europe*, ed. Katrin Kivimaa (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2012), 21.
[38] Dimitrakaki, 'Feminist Politics,' 22-23.

DIY artistic production and Institutional Critique could be raised against the discursive seclusion of NI as predominantly a Nordic or Northwestern current. If this particular focus runs the risk of failing to adequately vindicate its ties to the history of Institutional Critique, it does so also in terms of omitting the institutionally critical history of various geopolitical contexts. Despite discursive or curatorial efforts to *include* peripheral areas, the mechanisms of *semi-periphery* are still operative in maintaining the periphery. For instance, such mechanisms are arguably intensified when the conditioning of the present by the past is ignored, repressed and solidified as a stable phantasm, while well-intended inclusive efforts have space or time only for the *contemporary* institutional iterations of the perceived-as-peripheral areas. Yet, skipping the *history* of the semi-peripheral areas contributes in their appearing solely as peripheries, as constantly trying to catch up and as never quite succeeding. My argument here is twofold. On the one hand, I uphold the necessity to visibly consider the history of whatever periphery or semi-periphery is to be included, as well as those cases when the clear hierarchy between centre and periphery would be challenged. On the other hand, I propose the viewpoint of the semi-periphery, not only as an outward gaze directed to the peripheral other but also as introspection within the (supposed) centre. Thus, the focus would be placed on the commonality that arises from the relativity of position, as opposed to the absolute points of the core and the periphery.

Building historical perspective through counter-accounts

A pertinent account that complicates and nuances the decline of NI can be found in Marita Muukkonen's deliberations on the closure of NIFCA in 2007. Muukkonen was curator at NIFCA. Her account delves deep into the history of the formation of national identity and her Nordic and Finnish focus takes well into consideration the socioeconomic, political and mediatic shifts that have shaped nationalism from early on in the twentieth century. Her examination articulates the passage from the 'welfare state nationalism' (1960s to 1990s) in the Nordic countries to 'competitive nationalism,' as also a European

neoliberal phenomenon permitted by the instrumentalisation of cultural economies as national products.[39] She makes a strong case of persisting nationalism centred around the Nordic identity as a unity that was cultivated in Finland since the ideological preparation of its national independence at the end of the late nineteenth century. Since the 1990s, the narrative of economic competitiveness within the European Union led Finnish (and presumably other Nordic) governmental policy to essentially solidify the Nordic identity *through* a 'multiculturalist tolerant humanitarianism' that ultimately excludes the 'immigrant or the other.' For Muukkonen, this condition partly explains to a great extent the governmental hostility towards art institutions such as NIFCA, which attempted to 'take an active role in the Nordic policy-making level and make a stand to the effect that "culture" or the arts should not be instrumentalised in an attempt to construct and cement a mythical Nordic identity and a unity of Nordicness.'[40] Thus, according to Muukkonen,

> a crucial point in NIFCA's art praxis was not attempting to speak for others, be they refugees, unemployed, precarious workers, or anyone else, but rather to consider how NIFCA as an art institution might function as a mediator, a translator, and a meeting place for practices in art and other disciplines, between the practitioners and their public […].[41]

Developments of the last decade that see nationalism and authoritarianism on the rise in Europe *as a whole* comes to confirm Muukkonen's account, her deixis of the underlying exclusion of both working-class subjects and displaced others and the long-lasting, historically diffused thread of nationalism that can never be attributed to a single cause and effect instance, as salient problems also in Nordic Europe prior to and throughout the period of globalisation.

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[39] Marita Muukkonen, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Art Institutions and Creative Industries' in *Contemporary Art and Nationalism: Critical Reader*, ed. Minna Henriksson and Sezgin Boynik (Pristina: Institute of Contemporary Art "EXIT", Center for Humanistic Studies "Gani Bobi", 2007) [unpaginated].
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.

Taking into account that the historicisation of a European semi-peripheral tradition of Institutional Critique is a colossal research endeavour on which volumes have already been devoted, I will refer to a pre-1989 example that fits the core of Institutional Critique, both in terms of theme and methodology. This is a centrifugal attempt to merely acknowledge a relatively more invisible but equally rich discourse alongside the western-centric historical background that this thesis has largely employed in terms of Institutional Critique before 1989.[42] *Galéria Ganku* is a fictive art institution initiated in 1971 and carried on in various 'self-archiving' forms through the 1980s by internationally acclaimed Slovak artist Július Koller. *Galéria Ganku* refers to the homonymous mountain peak in the High Tatra mountain range (height: 2459 meters) located along the border of Slovakia and Poland. Koller employed this peak as the imaginary site of his art institution through a creative process of drawing, writing, tracing and mapping on photographs of the site largely found in mountain tourism magazines (but also photos of family trips to the Tatras, postcards and other related everyday paraphernalia), as the culture of mountaineering was growing in the region. This process has been described by Daniel Grúň as 'factographic fiction.'[43] The peak is largely inaccessible and sets a challenge to high-skilled climbers – an aspect relevant to Koller's work that commonly incorporated sports and games references.[44] More relevant to Institutional Critique is the 'ironic idea of a private gallery,' in the context of socialist Czechoslovakia,

[42] For indicative instances of such discourse see:
Aneta Jarzębska, 'Transgressing the Borders of Gallery Space: Subversive Practices of Alternative Art Galleries in East Germany and Poland of the 1970s' (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2017, accessed February 11, 2019, https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/files/68670692/FULL_TEXT.PDF);
Daniel Grúň, 'Amateurism Under Socialism,' *Third Text* 32, no. 4 (2018): 434-49, accessed, February 11, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/09528822.2018.1493838;
Hana Buddeus, 'Infiltrating the Art World through Photography,' *Third Text* 32, no. 4 (2018): 468-84, accessed, February 11, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/09528822.2018.1505314;
Barbara Orel, 'Women's Perspective: The Contribution of the Ljubljana Alternative Arts Scene in the 1980s,' in *Performative Gestures Political Moves*, ed. Katja Kobolt and Lana Zdravković, 79-96 (Zagreb: Red Athena University Press, 2014)

[43] Daniel Grúň, 'A Guide to Ganek Gallery: The Archive of Július Koller's Fictive Institution,' in *Július Koller*: *Galéria Ganku, ed.* Daniel Grúň (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2014), 37.

[44] The awe-inspiring, skyscraping mountain peak was also imagined by Koller as a cosmic point of entry to the Universe. This was strongly manifested in the alternative name *U.F.O. Gallery – Ganek Gallery, High Tatras (U.F.O.G.)* that emerged in documentation in the early 1980s.

where private galleries and the art market have not been formed and belong to an external, western world. Grúň writes:

> The Ganek Gallery is not a utopian vision of an institution […]; it is rather an institution constituted for utopian visions. Koller privatised a space for the gallery in an inaccessible mountain terrain as a reaction to the inadequacy of other exhibiting opportunities. He imitated and also ridiculed the principles of institutional operation. […] In this process the artist himself becomes the holder of the archive, thus compensating for the insufficient or non-existent collective interest on the part of public institutions.[45]

A collective archival iteration of *Galéria Ganku* (one out of many that emerged from informal gatherings in apartments) took the form of a statute that played with language as a 'bureaucratic apparatus' – similarly to methodologies of western-centric traditions of Institutional Critique.[46] However, *Galéria Ganku*'s relation to its own (art) institutional context and its perception of the western institutional context should be seen as complicating an analysis of such relation in historical accounts of western Institutional Critique. According to Grúň:

> In contrast to the former West, where critical dialogue with the bureaucratic and ideological apparatus of the museum brought artists in direct confrontation with the art institution, among artists in Slovakia there was rather a growing desire for the museum, which led to the foundation of parallel initiatives and alternative forms of presentation for unofficial art. Expressions of this desire for the museum were accompanied by the trauma symptom of split personality (the artists became simultaneously the regime's decorators and its opponents) and symbolic exclusion from the institutional operation of real socialism.[47]

I do not endeavour to validate or dispute the historical specificity or accuracy of the psychosocially experienced and acted upon institutional absence or lack during Koller's period that Grúň alludes to, as the mere register of this condition

[45] Grúň, 'A Guide to Ganek Gallery,' 30.
[46] Ibid., 32.
[47] Grúň, 'A Guide to Ganek Gallery,' 36.

clearly informs the post-1989 semi-periphery that I discuss in this chapter. *Galéria Ganku* becomes significant to this thesis as a non-Western pre-1989 case study that not only contributes pertinently and originally to a western artistic tradition of Institutional Critique but also portrays elements of transitive discursivity assignable to the thread of discursive practice analysed in Chapter 4. Moreover, *the fictive gallery* could be seen as part of the historical background for the imaginary and mock-institutional projects that I discuss in detail in Chapter 6.

Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź (Poland) is another institution of the European semi-periphery that both challenges the clear institutional dichotomies of core and periphery and experiments with its own institutional positionality and vision. This museum owns and hosts one of the oldest and most historically significant international modern and contemporary art collections in Europe. This significance is attributable to a few key aspects. First, its initiation (1929) coincides with the period when notable western institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York or the Landesmuseum in Hanover begun to develop their own twentieth century art collections.[48] Secondly, Muzeum Sztuki's collection was initiated and run by a group of avant-garde artists under the name 'a.r.', that stands for revolutionary artists or real avant-garde. Founding members of the group were Władysław Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro and Henryk Stażewski. The poets Julian Przyboś and Jan Brzękowski are also considered contributing initiators of the collection.[49] The group members were artistically active only individually both in Poland and internationally. According to Magdalena Wróblewska, their group practice was curatorial, involving organisational and publishing work that was largely co-ordinated via post.[50] Their endeavour in putting together the collection (mainly 1929-1932, extended until 1938) was met with great appreciation by western artists of the European avant-garde of the time, such as Hans Arp, Fernand

[48] Glenn D. Lowry, 'Museum of modern art,' *Britannica*, accessed January 14, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/art/museum-of-modern-art-institution.
[49] 'History,' Muzeum Sztuki, accessed January 14, 2019, https://msl.org.pl/en/museum/history.html.
[50] Magdalena Wróblewska, 'a.r. Group,' *Culture.pl*, last modified November, 2018, https://culture.pl/en/artist/ar-group.

Léger, Max Ernst and Kurt Schwitters.[51] These artists donated works to the collection, foregrounding a tradition of prominent European artists that would follow through with their own artistic contributions.[52] The collection aspired from early on to maintain and accentuate the connection between Polish movements or streams thereof (such as Formism, Constructivism and Unism) and wider European avant-gardes and strategically made a point of including Polish artists who refused to conform with the prescriptions of socialist realism.[53] Moreover, the local authorities of Łódź were unusually accommodating, as, in 1931, they allowed the core of the collection to be publicly displayed in the Julian and Kazimierz Bartoszewicz Museum of History and Art in Łódź, that would later turn into Muzeum Sztuki.[54]

> Jarosław Suchan, the museum's director since 2006 has stated: 'At the beginning, Strzemiński tried to gather and present such a collection in Warsaw. However, this proposal proved too revolutionary for the city. The [then] socialist municipal authorities of Łódź took more favourable approach towards the whole idea. One of the councillors, Przecław Smolik, was the most avid proponent of displaying the collection in a museum in Łódź. It is worth mentioning that Łódź was a rather new city, it did not carry such heavy historical burden as Warsaw, Kraków or Poznań. This may have been the reason for its openness to such revolutionary initiatives. Concentration of industry gave birth to a modern social structure with new bourgeoisie, who did not really want to build their cultural identity based on references to the past. Last but not least, Łódź was a really cosmopolitan city. Apart from the Poles, there were Russians, Germans, Jews, as well as others.'

Despite its global art historical significance, Muzeum Sztuki and its collection is disproportionately visible within the European art institutional landscape. Such relative invisibility can be observed both in the art-institutional discourse and in the realm of collaborative institutional networks or initiatives with diverse funding resources, of the scale of traditionally core and predominantly western institutions that own modern and contemporary art collections. In a personal interview (2017), Ewa

[51] Muzeum Sztuki, 'History.'
[52] 'XX and XXI Century Art Collection,' Muzeum Sztuki, accessed January 14, 2019, https://msl.org.pl/en/collection/xx-and-xxi-century-art-collection.html.
[53] Muzeum Sztuki, 'XX and XXI Century Art Collection.'
[54] Jarosław Suchan, 'Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź: Confronting Avant-garde with Modern Artistic Practice,' interview by Monika Kozub, *Contemporary Lynx*, February 2016, accessed January 15, 2019, http://contemporarylynx.co.uk/muzeum-sztuki-in-lodz-confronting-avant-garde-with-modern-artistic-practice.

Majewska emphatically confirmed the institution's unacknowledged historical value. This, I argue, should be associated both with the actuality of the absence of the art market in state-socialist Poland, at least from the end of World War II until 1989, and with the broader *perceived and mythologised* institutional and infrastructural deficit in relation to the (former) West that relates to this economic and political discrepancy and persists in the post-socialist condition. The artist-run methodologies of the a.r. group in developing the collection that was largely dependent on the group's network of affiliates and amical donations as contributions by other artists could be juxtaposed with the potency displayed by institutions such as the Tate, MoMa in New York or the Landesmuseum that were already endowed with the institutional legitimacy, public or governmental blessing and power to robustly claim and acquire their collections.[55] As Magdalena Wróblewska has suggested regarding the collection, '[t]he project's success was largely associated with Strzemiński's formidable status in Łódź, which stemmed from his personality and charisma, rather than his official obligations.'[56]

The museum's enduring importance in terms of instituent praxis can be glimpsed in the understanding of its own historical agency: 'The primary value of the collection, for the most part experimental, is its attitude of constant openness to contemporary times, which are a derivative of the tradition of the past.'[57] Adjacent to this temporal and historical experimentation is the museum's sustained reflection of its own institutional perception, projection and vision regarding its internal (Polish) and external (global) affinities and limitations, not least in terms of visibility. Since 2013, the museum has been collaborating with MoMA's network, Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives (C-MAP), 'a cross-departmental, internal research program at MoMA that fosters the multiyear study of art histories outside North America and Western Europe.'[58] Furthermore, since 2008, the museum has been the

[55] Glenn D. Lowry, 'Museum of modern art.'
[56] Magdalena Wróblewska, 'a.r. Group.'
[57] Muzeum Sztuki, 'XX and XXI century art collection.'
[58] 'About Post,' Post: Notes on Modern and Contemporary Art Around the Globe, accessed January 15, 2019, https://post.at.moma.org/aboutpost.

official working site for the Łódzkie Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych (the Łódź Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts), that has formed a partnering collection focussing on contemporary Polish and Łódź-based artists, akin to the avant-garde spirit of the Muzeum Sztuki collection. According to Majewska, the current internal conflicts within the museum and the management of its collection often concern curatorial tensions between postcolonial and decolonial attitudes, in terms of whether or not (or how to) differentiate the curatorial engagement with the geography of Eastern and Central Europe in relation to the rest of Europe and the globe.[59] Arguably, the museum's collaboration with C-MAP demonstrates the tendency to inhabit the post-colonial condition, as the network has been initiated by a core institutional pillar of western culture that openly seeks to consider and perhaps amend the visibility gap as regards the history of geopolitical (semi-)peripheries. Perhaps in a more assertive attempt to position itself as a global art-institutional playmaker, in 2012, the museum begun collaborating with Google Art Project, making a small part of the collection available for online display through Google's platform. The museum's director Jarosław Suchan has referred to this collaboration as merely a part of the broader tendency for online cultural consumption, without commenting on the corporate aspect of it.[60] It is likely that the Google collaboration undermines the collection's avant-garde ethos, as it could be taken to prioritise corporate global institutional agents over more independent or publicly funded institutional networks, such as L' Internationale. Nonetheless, the difficulties of experimentation with and intervention into an institution's self-positioning from the particular position of the semi-periphery should not be downplayed. In the case of the Muzeum Sztuki, a tension could be discerned between striving to drastically compensate what could be interpreted as an imposed and largely undeserved position outside of the (western) centre and remaining faithful to a radical or avant-garde curatorial/institutional past.

[59] Personal interview, 2017.
[60] Jarosław Suchan, 'Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.'

Case studies: Kunsthalle Athena and Vector

Kunsthalle Athena (KA) in Athens and Vector in Iași constitute relevant contemporary examples in a discourse that examines critical or alternative institutions in the semi-periphery. Arguably KA and Vector should be examined in the context of both NI *and* the dominant neoliberal institutions to which NI has been an alternative, not least as they bear strong similarities to the characteristics Möntmann describes referring to the art institutions in India. The examination of these two institutions does not aim at constructing a semi-peripheral Southeastern institutional cluster as barricaded from the dominant historicisation of NI as a Northwestern core. Rather, it seeks to annotate common threads and flag up issues that might surface as crossing and traversing art institutions in Europe.

Even though I discuss both Vector's and KA's sociopolitical, economic and cultural contexts as semi-peripheral, they are by no means equated. Vector is situated in a small city in a country where private galleries and foundations could operate only after 1989. Kunsthalle Athena is situated in the capital city of a Mediterranean country with an uninterrupted capitalist economy since the 19th century. Yet Greece is typically placed in the periphery of Europe, and since 2010 it features on the list of countries forming the new P.I.I.G.S. 'bloc'. Greece has been an exception in the Balkans, having followed the trajectory of Western European culture and not having experienced the formidable upheavals of former 'communist' states in the region branded 'transitional' during the 1990s.[61] Moreover, unlike Spain, Portugal and Italy, also in PIIGS, Greece does not have an imperial history but rather sees itself as having been colonised by the Ottoman Empire up to the early 19th century.

[61] For a critical discussion of 'transition' and post-socialism see Dimitrakaki, 'Feminist Politics and Institutional Critiques,' 23-24.

Vector

Vector is a contemporary art institution situated in Iași, Romania's fourth most populous city (of just over three hundred thousand inhabitants). Vector was founded in 2001 by eight artists, and its activity began to fade in 2009 when its space was closed.[62] Iași is a university city (with Romania's oldest university) and a cultural and historical centre situated in the geographical periphery of the country, 406 kilometers away from Bucharest. Its remoteness has been a formative issue for Vector's institutional course and development. According to founding member and former director Livia Pancu,

> when Vector was initiated there was no museum or other kind of national institution focused on contemporary art in Romania. Vector and other active organisations were therefore acting as substitutes, and were taking responsibility for critical discourse across the country. The National Museum of Contemporary Art was only inaugurated in 2004 in Bucharest. Soon after, the activities of this museum became almost irrelevant for part of the Romanian contemporary art scene.[63]

In 2001, Romania had been in a post-socialist condition or period of 'transition' for more than ten years, which means that commercial galleries and private funding had begun to have a stake in the art field. In 1993, the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (George Soros being one of the most important private investors globally) based in Budapest branches out with offices in Bucharest (as well as Riga, Vilnius, Kiev, Ljubljana and Sofia, after Bratislava, Moscow, Prague, Tallinn and Warsaw in 1992).[64] By 2004, numerous private contemporary art galleries such as Possibila, Arnaid and H'art were operating in Bucharest. In contrast to this fast pace of keeping up with the art market of non-former-socialist countries, there seemed to be a concurrent deficit of public or independent institutions relevant to specific publics and able to

[62] Personal interview with Vlad Morariu, 2016.
[63] Livia Pancu, 'The Almost Institution,' in *Self-Organised*, ed. Steine Hebert and Anne Szefer Karlsen (London: Open Editions; Bergen: Hordaland Art Centre, 2013), 77.
[64] Octavian Esanu, 'SCCA,' Contimporary, accessed October 21, 2014, http://www.contimporary.org/dictionary/view/7.

generate critical discourse. Pancu's observation that critical discourse in relation to contemporary art hardly existed is indicative. Vector's co-founder, Matei Bejenaru, also stated, referring to the period of 1993-1994:

> It was George Soros who came and put his own philosophy and structure into place in the region. Now I am critical of Soros, but at the time his projects were maybe a necessary step. There was no infrastructure. Civic society was undeveloped. Independent initiatives were very weak.[65]

Vlad Morariu who joined Vector in 2004 describes the local community of Iași as largely conservative, religious and not familiar with contemporary art and the local authorities as unsupportive, not simply in terms of funding but also delaying administrative processes.[66]

Vector emerged out of a group of artists who since 1997 had been organising Periferic, a yearly performance festival that was initiated by Bejenaru and funded by the French Cultural Centre in Iași. The festival gradually turned into Periferic Biennial and was incorporated into Vector's projects. According to its description, 'Periferic Biennial is the most extensive contemporary art initiative in post-communist Romania, collecting and presenting a wide range of artistic attitudes concerned with the relationship between centre and periphery'.[67] Vector became a legal organisational entity in 2001 but it only acquired a gallery space and offices in 2004 with funding it received from Pro Helvetia (a Swiss cultural foundation that at the time sponsored cultural programmes in Balkan countries) for the cARTtier three-year project (2004-2007). Apart from financing Vector's space and to a large extent the development of Periferic Biennial, cARTtier was a socio-cultural project in a stricter sense that allowed for direct interaction with the Iași community. According to Morariu, the project included urban interventions such as murals on building facades (an innovative

[65] Matei Bejenaru, 'Associations: Interview with Vector Association Part 1,' in conversation with Kristina Lee Podesva and Livia Pancu, *Arc Post: Online Space for Artist-Run Culture*, March 2011, accessed January 12, 2015, http://arcpost.ca/articles/interview-with-vector-association.
[66] Personal interview with Morariu, 2016.
[67] '"Periferic – a Contemporary Art Biennial at the Edge of Europe" by Matei Bejenaru,' Romanian Cultural Centre London, September 2007, accessed October 25, 2014, http://www.romanianculturalcentre.org.uk/post.php?id=524&v=1.

project in the Romanian context) and it involved 'initiative groups' from the neighbourhood in co-organising local festivals. In 2004, Vector re-expanded its hitherto team with sociologists and social workers, who also contributed in this socially-engaged practice. Vector's activity also included a residency programme, offsite exhibitions (for instance, at the former Turkish bath in 2004) and two periodical publications (*Vector – Art and Culture in Context*, 2005-2007, and *Vector – Critical Research in Context*, 2010 - present).

The last Periferic Biennial took place in 2008. In 2010, Bejenaru left Vector. Together with his decision to leave, he organised a conference with people who had collaborated with Vector in the past to discuss the institution's future. This resulted in a publication documenting Vector's activity from 1997 to 2010.[68] Shortly after this, Pancu decided to test out an entirely new strategy by which Vector would cease its local activity and increase instead its visibility –indeed presence – abroad, by accepting international invitations for all sorts of collaboration. Thus, Vector spent a 'year on the road,' whose stops included major western/core commercial art fairs such as the Frame section of Frieze Art Fair (2010), Vienna Art Fair (2011) and Preview Berlin Art Fair (2011).[69] Through this process, Vector reinvigorated its introspection as an art institution on different grounds.[70] Following this year and shifts in the dynamics of the group, Vector decided to cease all its public activity and launch what Pancu calls the 'strategy of invisibility'.[71] Pancu maintains that they were trying to resist their retroactive desire to produce; 'we would feel less inclined to work with projects created by inertia and instead be inspired by the reality surrounding us'.[72] Pancu's text in *Self-organised* could be the 'first sign of visibility' for Vector after the organisation's 'invisibility' period, even though she had already left Vector (2012) and thus, her text does not necessarily represent the team.[73] Since 2013, the *Vector – Critical Research in Context* publication

[68] Pancu, 'Almost Institution,' 78.
[69] Ibid., 79.
[70] Ibid., 78-79.
[71] Ibid., 79.
[72] Ibid., 80.
[73] Ibid.

has evolved into a collaboration with 'George Enescu' National University of the Arts in Iași.[74] In 2016, Vector announced that is was present again on the Iași art scene under the coordination of Dan Acostioaei.[75]

Throughout its course, Vector was experimenting with its institutional format and positioning. However, this experimentation was not one of pure form and it did not take place in a vacuum – carried, that is, out for experimentation's sake – but was conditioned by material and immaterial necessities defining Vector's daily reality.

Vector's institutional status fluctuated according to shifting urgencies and multiple clashing visions of stakeholders. Pancu describes this among other characteristics by signposting a phrase that could capture Vector's oscillating nature as an institution, 'The Almost Institution'.[76] Initially, Vector resembled more a self-organised group of people or an artist collective who share authorship and experiment with their art and their local context. However, Vector's urge and effort to transform itself into a stable institution, one which would exceed the practice and visions of its members, was evident nearly from the start. Despite intentions however, reality seemed to fall short of both the ambition for equal power among the team members and the desire to set up an institution (rather than a group of people). As Pancu writes, 'we often described ourselves as "a group of people", while our behaviour could periodically be characterised by strict rules and hierarchy'[77] and elsewhere, 'we never allowed ourselves to become personally detached from Vector, and the knowledge we gradually developed over time stayed within our own group'.[78]

[74] The latest publication output is the book: Cătălin Gheorghe, ed., *Vector – Critical Research in Context: After the Educational Turn* (Iași: 'George Enescu' National University of the Arts; Vector Association, 2017). The book revisits the aftermath of the educational turn with new essays from old and new protagonists of the discourse.
[75] This was on the occasion of a collaboration between Vector and tranzit.ro/ Iași for an exhibition/event in the context of Diaspora Week (August 2016).
[76] Pancu, 'Almost Institution,' 75.
[77] Ibid, 77.
[78] Ibid.

Pancu also refers to 'overproduction' in relation to Vector's programming and activities that left no 'room for reflection on the contents and the direction things were taking'.[79] Vector's long and ambitious list of activities was being supported only by personal contacts from people working in the arts and funding structures that expressed specific demands on these activities.[80] Pancu often mentions the team's exhaustion and the need of some of them 'to work second jobs to earn their living'.[81] According to Morariu, Vector's team was constantly overworked. Those who were present prior to the funding from Pro Helvetia were volunteering and afterwards, Vector's members were merely surviving on salaries of the scale of 150 euros per month. Morariu registers a somewhat frenetic atmosphere whereby it felt like there were scarce viable job alternatives (in cultural work and in general) and the workers were embracing these conditions in a self-exploitative context. Furthermore, in Vector, there was a general sense of disorganisation as well as ambiguity or arbitrariness in the allocation of roles and tasks:

> If there was a sense of organisation it was because of individual people – some people did a lot of work. It was definitely unhealthy, things were not straight, organisational roles were overlapping. It had to do more with the individuals assuming the roles rather than sticking with the preplanned structure (that existed only for applications).

Pancu explains that the urge to 'over-produce' had its grounds on the 'lack of strong institutions, and the need for production platforms for contemporary art'.[82] She states:

> For those running Vector, it was essential to facilitate the production of art that connected with the international scene and with large-scale exhibitions as a means to create and educate an audience. Throughout the years, a big institutional infrastructure was simulated by organising a wide variety of projects. […] The

[79] Ibid., 78.
[80] Ibid., 76.
[81] Ibid., 78.
[82] Ibid., 77.

> disadvantage of this was that we behaved in a mimetic manner, trying to follow and apply models that came from somewhere else.[83]

Pancu's viewpoint indicates an attempt to emulate big institutional infrastructure while underestimating how this would interact with Vector's resources and its overall socio-economic context. Morariu specifies that Vector's overproduction was directly attributable to clear aspirations to resemble western/core art institutional paradigms, despite collaborations and associations with institutions and practitioners from other – similarly semi-peripheral – former-socialist contexts such as Novi Sad (Serbia), Slovenia and Hungary. Vector's members strived for 'the promise of institutionalisation' that would provide them with a 'stable model'.[84] They believed that Vector's activity was in need of 'a stable platform with a proper infrastructure to operate in a sustainable manner.'[85] For Pancu, institutionalisation understood as stability and sustainability of an appropriate infrastructure would be a process by which Vector would shift from being an 'almost' institution to being a *proper* institution. She suggests that 'stability meant first of all a singular vision in order to have a high degree of flexibility in approaching funding bodies', that were expected to favour permanent, 'institutionalised' structures.[86]

Yet, the shift towards stable and sustainable infrastructure was desired for different reasons by different group members. According to Pancu, the initial members, who were artists, reached a point where they wanted to use Vector – primarily or even exclusively – as a platform to exhibit their own work in a consolidated context of display and critical review.[87] For the initial members, those who joined later and took over organisational roles inevitably imposed 'institutionalisation.'[88] According to Morariu, 'artists wanted to show their work or did not have time to show their work because of the organisational overload.' There was also internal conflict regarding the political overtness of the

[83] Ibid., 76.
[84] Ibid., 77.
[85] Ibid., 80.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 78.
[88] Ibid.

publications. More broadly, disagreements among the members regarding their visions for Vector were directly associated with the project's failure to achieve a stable form.[89] Such predicaments are far from uncommon in conditions of semi-periphery. The uncertainty and shakiness of conscious or unconscious aspirations torn between transcending or soberly negotiating the institution's geopolitical position constitute semi-peripheral characteristics and it is hardly surprising that they would translate into internal friction.

Kunsthalle Athena

Kunsthalle Athena was initiated in 2010, at the breakout the Greek economic crisis. It was founded by Greek curator Marina Fokidis, being in many respects in a DIY, independent gesture that denounced some of the problems that the particular context of the Greek economy and policy entails in relation to visual art. As she explained in a 2014 interview:

> If we were fed up with something, this was the way that [arts] institutions operate in Greece – very bureaucratic, in close relation with state corruption, inflexible, not friendly to audiences, stagnant. On the other hand, there exist the private collectors' institutions [foundations] that might think they operate in an open, flexible and democratic way. But they are not really […]. When we started, we had no idea that Kunsthalle Athena would become established as a sort of 'real' institution and would run for four years now. And it was born out of collective 'lack', out of collective needs, out of collective worries and collective passion. Not out of a state or governmental cultural strategy. KA started with no solid base either in terms of funding or space.[90]

The initial idea was that KA would constitute a proposal for a potential institution in Athens that would be consumed in an exhibition event. Project by project, it became popular with Athenian and international audiences. Perhaps in opposition to Vector's initial stages, the experimental character of KA in terms of its institutional status was clear from the start. Instead of attempting

[89] Ibid., 80.
[90] Personal interview with Marina Fokidis, 2014.

mimetic strategies, KA's experimentation went hand in hand with sensitivity to its context.

In more practical terms, KA can be described as an independent art centre for contemporary art with an international network of collaborators. It received no funding from neither public nor private entities. It was run on a voluntary and largely part-time basis, although working hours tended to be flexible. Its space is a centrally located, disused neo-classical building in need of repairs and of a 'squat aesthetic', granted by its owner on a 'temporary basis.' The economic value of the building was rising through its use as an art centre in Metaxourghio, a generally downgraded, poor, ethnically diverse and slowly gentrified area of central Athens. Part of the production costs were covered by small voluntary donations by visitors or modest sponsorships (mostly from alcoholic beverage companies or local sellers). The organisational structure was quite loose, with most of the staff enjoying a high degree of personal initiative and creative management of issues.

Concerning its activities, KA mounted group or solo exhibitions, commissioned exhibitions to external curators and ran a parallel programme called 'Political Speeches' that included performances, talks, discussions and screenings. Participating artists, curators and theorists were Greek or international and KA's network of collaborators from abroad is noteworthy. This network was partly what made possible the initiation of a biannual publication in English, *South as a State of Mind*', distributed in numerous countries in Europe and North America. The decision to initiate the magazine was partly connected with the fact that KA's space is closed down during the winter months because of maintenance issues and the lack of central heating.

KA's name was an ironic gesture towards the impossibility of setting up institutions of the type of a German Kunsthalle in Greece, given the aforementioned context. Kunsthalles, existing predominantly in German-speaking countries, are publicly funded institutions usually aiming at promoting contemporary art. They have an official character and it would be difficult to characterise the exhibitions they host as experimental, even though they

usually are of high quality. However, as Fokidis asserts, KA is not at all against any institutional framework. In fact, KA 'adopts the model of a Kunstverein', even though it is called Kunsthalle. The term 'Kunstverein' refers to more informal art centres that often prioritise community issues and social exchange than an austere exhibition programming. So, as Fokidis explains, adopting the term Kunsthalle was 'a soft hijacking' of the institutional connotations of a Kunsthalle: 'when we decided to stay independent, we turned our project into a study, an experiment on how an institution like a kunsthalle should operate ideally,' in the Athenian context.

KA was indirectly but substantially implicated in one of the most significant global contemporary art exhibitions/institutions, that of Documenta, mostly through *South as a State of Mind*, the sibling publication of KA, run and staffed by the same people, with a similar network of collaborators and similar creative input and style. Fokidis was initially appointed Head of Artistic Office in Athens (later Curatorial Advisor) and *South as a State of Mind* was turned into the official magazine of Documenta 14. According to Fokidis, Documenta's (working) title 'Learning from Athens' alluded to the fact that one of the oldest most solid institutions for contemporary art (with state and private funding, a series of boards behind it and reaching about a million visitors each time) actually wanted to learn as well from 'independent initiatives coming from an economically and socially wounded country'. At the same time, she recognises what was in turn offered to the Athenian initiatives as well as the collaborative terms of this institutional encounter:

> Not only will we have a break from the urgency of surviving, an urgency that has exhausted us to the limits of our capacity, but we will also open up to a larger spectrum of discussions and collaborations and also possibly to a much larger audience. […] A great paradox is that the magazine *South as a State of Mind* and Documenta have been discussing this merger [as] equal institutional entities. And although we all know that this is the way it should be, it is not always evident [that] a small magazine and one of the largest art institutions [would] have such a fair encounter.

The transition of KA's core staff into working for Documenta 14 led organically to KA's closure as an institution, and the post-Documenta era finds the team's

Athens-based members having progressed to new projects.[91] KA's building eventually became the (legal squatting) basis of Communitism, a collective active in the area of Metaxourghio since 2015. Communitism attempts to mildly intervene on infrastructure problems in a spirit of creative commons or Do It Ourselves (DIO), involving and bringing together diverse local communities as well as international creatives.[92]

The relation of infrastructure and instituent praxis through Vector and Kunsthalle Athena

In many respects, it seems reasonable to suggest that both Vector and KA are assignable to the experimental art-institutional stream paved by NI – even as they had to situate themselves within relatively more uncertain sociopolitical, economic and institutional frameworks that did not facilitate experimentation. Public funding was granted to organisations normally associated with NI with relative ease and through overt processes (at least during its peak), while Vector and KA had to struggle against the aforementioned limitations arising from Romania and Greece's socio-economic and cultural contexts, regarding both access to funding and working conditions. Despite the contextual scarcity and difficulty, the two semi-peripheral art institutions showcased awareness of, and agency on, their institutional entity, as well as their surrounding global realities. Vector initially tried to simulate big infrastructure in order to make up for the lack of strong art institutions in Romania. Later on, it abandoned this strategy and experimented with different and even radical forms of operation, that eventually revealed the importance of the process of reaching a common vision, not least in order to articulate a relation to the public. KA sought to approach institutions of the kunstverein type, aware of the impossibility of direct simulations and 'toying' with the idea of transposing – indeed, translating

[91] *South* magazine continues to be published independently, after Documenta 14.
[92] 'Communitism Philosophy and Purpose,' Communitism, Medium, March 23, 2018, accessed February 25, 2019, https://medium.com/@communitism/communitism-philosophy-and-purpose-324e1c86ed0f.

– the institutional examples of kunsthalles and kunstvereins within the Greek context.

Arguably, Vector and KA's diverse contexts of semi-periphery instantiate iterations whereby the affective aspect of infrastructure is accentuated, validating Rogoff's focus on infrastructure's affective surplus in Chapter 3 as well as Möntmann's urge to disengage from too many codes and standards. Specifically, the *perception* of infrastructure imbalances can reproduce mechanisms of semi-periphery, whereby institutions respond to infrastructural lack by striving for 'big' infrastructure, or alternatively, by coming up with creatively ironic infrastructural versions, that are given up once big infrastructure becomes available. Thus, infrastructure functions as signification, and a possible way for it to be understood away from the formulaic import/export of pre-existing and stable systems, codes and processes is through the realm of instituent praxis, that appeals to infrastructure's affective aspect. This is not an appeal to infrastructure's allure as remnant of (paternalistic) modernism; rather, this and other kinds of seduction or repulsion evoked by infrastructure participate in enunciation and signification and potentially, in pre-personal, proto-subjective collective assemblages. If understood in a Guattarian framework, the conceptual realm of instituent praxis designating the creation of new significations as rules of law in and through the production of a subjectivity (or subject group) would already understand infrastructure in terms of (a)signification and treat it as affective knowledge. The irreducibilities of actual work conditions and the actualities of specific publics would be at play in the group's enunciative shift from the given code in its unconscious to conscious instituent praxis. Infrastructure is indeed often *desired (or loathed)* depending on the (perceived) presence or absence of a geopolitical context whereby stability or flexibility and (public) regulation secure non-exploitative working conditions and enable uninterrupted cultural production that relates with publics. Instituent praxis suggests that this desire should be linked primarily with a process of co-producing the system of rules and its control/feedback. Such process would generate an administrative infrastructure as much as it would be induced with affect.

Furthering the art-institutional experimental thread in Europe's semi-periphery: Examples from 2013 onwards

In continuation of a European open-ended thread of art institutions that respond critically to historically urgent conditions, I will refer briefly to more recent examples of institutions or institutional networks around Europe. These involve responses to issues that have emerged after the eruption of the global financial crisis in 2008 and after the surge of the European refugee crisis that could be roughly chronicled in 2013. For instance, the economic precarity and the casualisation of working conditions that are partly linked to broader austerity policies in the European Union exacerbating the gender-based imbalances both in the working sector and in a wider biopolitical sphere. Other issues pertain to the repercussions of the displacement, transfer and detention of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East, Near East and Africa, involving largely the Mediterranean and other European borders. This crisis has been associated – notably by theorist Judith Butler – with questions around the unequal distribution of 'grievability' of lives.[93] In this context that has prepared the ground for heightened nationalism, conservatism, racism and other authoritarian tendencies, Étienne Balibar's critical elaborations in 2004 of a 'transnational citizenship' that discuss the conditions of a potential redundancy of national borders and State sovereignty would seem today wishfully premised, albeit even more urgent.[94]

CAMP is an art institution in Copenhagen that has been founded in 2015 by Danish curators Frederikke Hansen and Tone Olaf Nielsen who since 2005 have been known as the transnational feminist curatorial collective Kuratorisk Aktion.[95] CAMP is a 'self-governing institution' entirely devoted to issues around 'displacement, migration, immigration, and asylum' – traits that render

[93] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable* (London: Verso, 2009).
[94] Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[95] The curatorial duo also worked for NIFCA between 2005 and 2006.

it a unique institution, at least in the Scandinavian context.[96] The institution is based in Trampoline House, an independent community centre for refugees and asylum seekers in Denmark, campaigning for refugee issues and providing training and support. Trampoline House was established in 2010 collectively by artists, asylum seekers, students, and professionals (including Nielsen and artists Morten Goll and Joachim Hamou and more than 100 asylum seekers and migration justice activists), in response to Danish immigration law and policy.[97] Even though CAMP has a fully developed and globally relevant curatorial and discursive programme distinct from the activity of the refugee community centre, in some respects, it breaks fundamentally from the observable relation that at least a part of NI maintained with community projects and activist agendas. CAMP is *not* first and foremost an art institution that generously hosts and facilitates community and activist agency, in a space that would otherwise reproduce the hierarchies of the exhibitionary complex. Rather, CAMP was founded specifically in order to mobilise art *towards* a 'greater understanding between displaced people and the communities that receive them – and to stimulate new visions for a more inclusive and equitable migration, refugee, and asylum policy.'[98] In this sense, its art-institutional function is adjacent or even supplementary to the community centre rather than the reverse.

It should also be stressed that, as Dimitrakaki has noted, the founding curatorial duo has been since before 2008 upholding 'its right to be openly positional – to be openly feminist, anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist and queer – irrespective of the existence of a social movement that could provide its ideological safety net.'[99] Yet, what is also noteworthy in the case of CAMP is the shift on behalf of the curatorial collective from a DIY approach and a 'necessary relationship with the institution of art' to the full adjacency to a

[96] 'About CAMP,' CAMP, accessed November 14, 2018, http://campcph.org/about-camp/.
[97] 'Vision and Mission,' Trampoline House, accessed November 14, 2018, https://www.trampolinehouse.dk/about/.
[98] CAMP, 'About CAMP.'
[99] Angela Dimitrakaki, *Gender, artWork and the Global Imperative* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 222.

specific institution (Trampoline House).[100] This shift should be attributed to both the increased urgency of the global refugee and migrant crisis as well as the precarity and gendered condition of freelance cultural labour, that, as Dimitrakaki observes, is also present in a Scandinavian context.[101]

Artists at Risk (AR) is 'an institution at the intersection of human rights and the arts.'[102] AR acquired its name and current form in 2016, but its mission and practice has already been present since 2013, in the context of Perpetuum Mobile, a 'curatorial vehicle' co-founded by Marita Muukkonen and Ivor Stodolsky in 2007 and registered in Finland.[103] AR aims at a worldwide scope but it is predominantly active in and around the European region. AR is 'dedicated to mapping the field of persecuted visual art practitioners, facilitating their safe passage from their countries of origin, hosting them at "AR-Residencies" and curating related projects, including the "AR Pavilion".'[104] The AR residencies have so far developed as collaborations with other European (art) institutions. The inaugural one that marked AR's current form took place in Helsinki in 2016.[105] The AR Pavilion amounts to exhibitionary documentation of AR's activity. AR is arguably a pioneering institutional network that intervenes in the artistic, biopolitical and institutional logistics of persecuted creative subjects, with a hands-on approach that involves 'legal assistance' and engagement with a 'safe exit from countries of origin,' as much as guidance through the European (art) institutional network of residencies.[106]

A less curatorially radical but discursively ambitious institution is the Institute of Radical Imagination (IRI), a 'think-tank' for knowledge exchange and production among 'experts – political scientists, economists, lawyers,

[100] Dimitrakaki, *Gender, artWork,* 223.
[101] Ibid. 224. Nielsen has also worked as Program Coordinator in the Trampoline House, which she co-established in 2010 with artists Morten Goll and Joachim Hamou and in collaboration with more than 100 asylum seekers and migration justice activists.
[102] 'About,' Artists at Risk, accessed November 15, 2018, https://artistsatrisk.org/about/?lang=en.
[103] 'About,' Perpetuum Mobile, accessed November 15, 2018, https://www.perpetualmobile.org/about/?lang=en.
[104] Artists at Risk, 'About.'
[105] 'Safe Haven Helsinki' won the Annual Art Act Award in 2016.
[106] In 2016, Perpetuum Mobile (PM) was awarded with the European Citizen's Prize by the European Parliament and in 2017, Artists at Risk (AR) won the Thematic State Prize of Finland.

architects, hackers, activists, artists and cultural producers,' specifically in the European South and the Mediterranean region.[107] Post-capitalism and the commons are strong keywords that underpin the theoretical connotations of IRI, as it aspires to be 'a hybrid between a travelling research centre, a refuge for intellectuals and artists at risk, a radical museum and a policy-making body generating ideas and applied knowledge that respond to specific urgent needs on the ground.'[108] Its activity consists in medium to large-scale discursive events that since 2017 have taken place in Napoli (2017), Madrid (2018) and Athens (2019). IRI's contribution to a European semi-peripheral cartography would be mainly locatable in the mobilisation of non-state/private art-relevant resources towards building connections and networks among local activist projects and groups that tend to self-organise around socioeconomic problems in the region.[109] It should be noted that the project is co-ordinated largely by more or less prominent figures of the (discursive) art world active in the region.[110]

The 'Consortium for Post-Artistic Practices' (KPP) is an informal activist research/discursive project that has been active in Poland since 2016. It started officially as a working group for the Congress of Culture in Warsaw in 2016, although the formulation of the project's main idea of the post-artistic sprung up through the exhibition 'Making Use. Life in Postartistic Times,' curated by Sebastian Cichocki, the former director of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. In some respects, the Consortium was developed in continuation of F/SUW that was discussed in Chapter 4 and responds to the critical time of aggravated conservatism and oppression in Poland in the face of reinvigorated nationalism and fascist anti-immigratory rhetoric and the

[107] 'IRI: Towards the Constitution of a Think-Tank for a Post-Capitalist Transition in the Mediterranean,' Institute of Radical Imagination, accessed January 18, 2019, https://instituteofradicalimagination.org/about/

[108] Institute of Radical Imagination, 'IRI.'

[109] The Institute of Radical Imagination is supported by the Foundation for the Arts Initiatives (FfAI) – a private foundation independent of any governments, agencies, NGOs, or their related agendas. It has its own endowment and does not rely on donors or public sources. FfAI's independence is central to its work and identity.

[110] See: 'General Assembly,' Institute of Radical Imagination, accessed January 18, 2019, https://instituteofradicalimagination.org/the-institute/general-assembly/.

depreciation of the rights of non-binary gendered people and women's reproductive rights.[111] Szreder who has a coordinating role in the Consortium has emphasised the 'pro-democratic,' 'anti-authoritarian' and anti-fascist orientation of the project.[112] A particularity of this project rests on the involvement of art affiliates in promoting a post-artistic shift that could be understood both as the extension of art worlds into less art-specific institutions and as the displacement of art-world concerns from art per se to the direct organisation of anti-fascist, feminist, pro-workers and pro-refugees mobilisation and action. According to Adam Mazur, this shift could be associated with the disillusionment among the politicised or socially aware Polish artistic community regarding the potential of art to be employed as a platform for socio-political change.[113] Another particularity is that, according to Szreder, the Consortium endeavours to implement a 'multi-authored' methodology without an author/director despite the presence of 'initiators' or 'animators.'[114] Instead, it promotes an activity more associable with a 'platform of individual projects,' as 'everybody usually attributes his/her project to herself/himself' and not directly to the Consortium, which has a 'low-key,' 'background' presence, so as to avoid becoming 'yet another art collective.'

Finally, Collection Collective is a 'prototypical international art collection established, owned, and managed collectively by its members' that started as a 'speculative curatorial proposal.'[115] It was initiated in 2017, when three

[111] In personal correspondence (2018), Kuba Szreder suggested that members of the F/SUW later took part in the Consortium.
On the recent Polish context of gender-based discrimination, see the report: 'All downhill from here: The rapid degradation of the rule of law in Poland: what it means for women's sexual and reproductive rights, and LGBT+ persons' rights,' Polish Society of Antidiscrimination Law (PSAL) and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), November 2018, accessed March 2, 2019, https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/fidh_pologne_web.pdf.
On the rise of neo-reactionary far-right: Christian Davies, 'Poland's President Addresses Far Right at Independence March,' *The Guardian*, November 2018, accessed March 2, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/11/poland-far-right-independence-centenary.
[112] Szreder, 'Exercises in the Curatorial Open Form,' 65 (See Introduction, fn. 4).
[113] Adam Mazur, 'Polish Art in a Period of Populism,' *Erste Stiftung*, January 10, 2019, accessed February 12, 2019, http://www.erstestiftung.org/en/polish-art-in-a-period-of-populism/.
[114] Personal correspondence.
[115] 'Collection Collective: Brief History,' Collection Collective, accessed February 10, 2019, http://www.collectioncollective.art/about.

Romanian curators (Judit Angel, Raluca Voinea, and Vlad Morariu) invited cultural workers and previous collaborators with whom there was a relationship of 'friendship and mutual trust' to become members of and contribute to the Collective. The first stage of the project was instantiated in Bratislava with the exhibition *Collection Collective: Template for a Future Model of Representation* (Tranzit.sk, 2017) that operated as an hypothetical collection and as the vehicle for discursive interaction and speculation among the members towards a more grounded, implementational phase. The latter continued through 2018, when the member count reached fifty. The second iteration of the project in October 2018 took the form of a public seminar ('Collection Collective: Tools for Self-Representation') that coincided with the collective's website launch in Bucharest at Tranzit.ro. Collection Collective makes a theoretical and practical case towards collectivising and self-curating the significatory imaginary of the subjectivities attached to an institution of property that has been traditionally associated with an individual and private (usually male) subject, the subjects involved in a public/official institutional regime with boards of trustees, curators and other experts, or in private corporations.[116] As Morariu suggests:

> in relation to anonymous and abstract subjects, Collection Collective does not position itself as a supra-subject, but as a collection of subjects that are attempting to collaborate, and as a self-curated collective that recognises both affinities and differences. This is why friendship and mutual recognition remain core values according to which the Collection is being developed.[117]

[116] Vlad Morariu, 'Collection Collective: Rethinking Function, Ownership and Possession', Collection Collective, 2018, accessed February 10, 2019, http://www.collectioncollective.art/text/collection-collective-rethinking-function-ownership-and-possession.
In 2014, the gender breakdown of private collectors globally was 71% male and 29% female. See: 'Art Collector Report 2014,' Sammlung-Wemhoener, accessed February 10, 2016, https://www.sammlung-wemhoener.com/img/press/2014/Art-Collector-Report-2014.pdf, 21.
[117] Vlad Morariu, 'Collection Collective.'

Outro

In this chapter, I have attempted to unsettle parts of the discursive canon that has historicised experimental institutional practice in the contemporary European art world. The concept of the semi-periphery has been employed in order to address the mechanisms implicit in the process of canonisation and the power asymmetries it entails. The canon itself is not a regimented institution agreed upon in some normative political sense among participating and excluded agents. The sedimentation of the canon in a hegemonic sense is but one part of the analysis. In the theory of instituent praxis, this sedimentation is active in the collective past or phantasmatic unconscious that conditions the present or future conscious becoming, which can in turn acknowledge the implicated semi-peripheral mechanisms and, in this light, make significational propositions. Such propositions reflect what should be just and aspire to undertake legal or deontic status.

From the perspective of instituent praxis, institutional experimentation should disengage from the search for static definitions for the delineation of the art institution, as if the issue at stake was simply a matter of power switching between presence and absence in the depths of subjectivity or the platitudes of social and political systems and as if power's complete abolition was the concrete and attainable end of criticality, or, as Rancière would put it, litigiousness. What matters instead is the potential for any practice, field, space or collectivity to consciously and creatively produce subjectivity in a code-breaking and rule-inventing enunciation. This is not to equate all practices in the art world regardless of their institutional grounding. Experimentation and analysis are indispensable towards instituent praxis, if at least the explicit forms of power are to be contained by co-produced rule-making. My analysis has added to a discourse of instances whereby institutionally inventive experimentation takes place in conditions of high risk and out of a sense of *epimeleia* or self-inquiry. Affective and ethical aspects cannot be stressed enough, particularly in contexts where official frameworks are not simply

oppressive but also absent and replaceable by forms of authoritarianism. Such aspects are not simply present in aesthetic or curatorial concerns in terms of parrhesiastic counter-formats; they should be seen as active in the conditions of and decisions around implicated labour, survival and liveability. As many case studies in this chapter would indicate, in semi-peripheral contexts, experimentation and analysis might appear as operating in a deadlock of overidentification and other forms of external influence/dependence rather than a creative and propositional self-inquiry: structural heteronomy instead of heterogenesis. However, these two states could easily be simultaneously encountered in any semi-periphery or even centre. The juxtaposition of these two states should not constitute a clear geopolitical divide, as it cannot directly translate to a simple case dictated by disadvantaged contexts against privileged ones.

On the other hand, seeking to disrupt the linear association of the potential of conscious becoming with economically or infrastructurally privileged contexts should not be conducive to a case-by-case individualistic approach for each institution and its context. This would be a liberal understanding that would preclude any collective formation of subjectivity through processes of autopoiesis and heterogenesis. Any emergent differences should be examined in light of instituent praxis. The discourse around alternative or experimental art institutions is equally symptomatic of what I described in Chapter 4 as perversions of currency-altering intentions. Institutional experimentation often subscribes to celebratory assertions aspiring to increased visibility, while it fails to engage in adequate heterogenetic or autopoietic functions that would generate currency-altering and currency-*creating* subjectivities and ontologies. Thereby, such experimentation can turn into an affirmative spectacle, for certain privileged fractions that desire to appreciate it. In Chapter 6, I discuss further what is left of or lost from aspirations of parrhesiastic institutional propositions, through a closer examination of the operative links between significational machinations, artificiality and instituent praxis.

6. Instituent Imaginaries and the Artificial Real: A Figurative Manual of Alter-/Para-/Mock- Institutions

An introductory note on para-institutions and alter-institutions

Sven Lütticken has argued that the twenty-first century finds the financialised art institutional sphere in a constant state of flux away from the inertia commonly associated with the institutional.[1] This is a state of contradictions whereby even in the context of mega-institutions but also in institutions of other scales, supposedly activist programming and agendas designed by curators and managers go hand in hand with exploitative, stale, market-like and competition-driven working conditions for supporting and mid-level staff as well as a perpetual game of symbolic and non-symbolic art-market value.[2] According to Lütticken, this fluctuating, micro-contradictory and all-encompassing financialised condition leaves no room for the 'immanent' tendencies of Institutional Critique or related practices.[3] Rather, practitioners that seek to circumvent or reject this condition create what Lütticken calls '*alter-institutional* and *para-institutional* organisations.'[4] Regarding the former, Lütticken refers to alternative networks and connections between art institutions such as L' Internationale (discussed in chapter 3) and Cluster or other forms of local-to-global networks that transgress canonical art

[1] Lütticken, 'Social Media,' 7 (See Ch. 2, fn. 212).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid. Lütticken borrows the term 'para-institution' from Tania Bruguera's and Fernando García-Dory's respective personal websites. See Tania Bruguera and Pablo Helguera, 'On Transpedagogy,' accessed May 21, 2018, http://www.taniabruguera.com/cms/239-0-On+transpedagogy.htm and Fernando García-Dory, 'Inland (2010—…)', accessed May 21, 2018, http://fernandogarciadory.com/index.php?/projects/inland/.
[emphasis in the original]

institutional frameworks.[5] Such networks can be found both ‘outside the mainstream of art-world capital flows and institutional hypertrophy’ and in global institutional meccas; Lütticken mentions Ruangrupa in Jakarta and CAMP in Mumbai as well as 16 Beaver in New York, MayDay Rooms in London, Casco — Office for Art, Design and Theory in Utrecht, footnoting that Casco's director Binna Choi is his partner.[6] Lütticken argues that such organisations expand the typical art-institutional stakeholders by bringing together 'artists, intellectuals and activists as well as groups that art institutions rarely consider "target audiences", such as cleaners or refugees.'[7] The implication is that contrary to a show-orientated programming logic these organisations prioritise pedagogical, socially-engaged, community-based or downright activist agendas. It becomes clear that such agendas could be seen as aligning with the institutional experimentation discussed in previous chapters and would also to some extent resonate with Mouffe's and other authors' calls to reclaim art institutions. What is particularly interesting is that Lütticken takes note of the diversity of the 'legal status' of such organisations and suggests that '[s]ome are foundations and may look like "regular" art institutions on paper, yet are run differently, with more collective decision-making and input from various networks and communities.'[8] This chapter begins from such ambivalent discrepancies and emulations between the 'on paper' or *nominal* (art-institutional) legal status, the idea of a *normative* art-institutional legal or organisational status and the idea of an organisation's *actual* mode of conduct and aims at situating them within a theoretical context that pertains to institution and artificiality.

To this end, Lütticken's conception of para-institutional organisations is key, even though the 'alter-' element of alter-institutions is also directly related to

[5] Lütticken, ‘Social Media,’ 7-8. Cluster is a network of eight contemporary art organisations (seven in Europe, one in Israel) situated in peripheral and/or residential urban locations. Its members are CAC Brétigny, Brétigny s/Orge, France; CA2M Centro Dos De Mayo, Madrid, Spain; Casco – Office for art Design and Theory, Utrecht, The Netherlands; Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Aubervilliers, France; Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden; The Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon, Israel; The Showroom, London, UK; Zavod P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E., Ljubljana. Slovenia.
[6] Lütticken, ‘Social Media,’ 8.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

such discrepancies. In fact, Lütticken does not aim at a clear-cut distinction between alter-institutions and para-institutions and acknowledges that they are all similarly entangled within more or less art-world networks. More broadly, it could be argued that such attempts to create typologies of art institutions or organisations often seem overdetermining or neglectful of specific populations of examples most of which could easily challenge the remit or the viability of each typology. However, the logics behind Lütticken's understanding of the para-institutional conduce to tracing the ambivalences that arise in the artificial real and the late capitalist institutional context.

Lütticken associates the para-institutional element of certain projects or organisations with their cooperation with more 'traditionally established institutions', their variable or non-existent legal status and their potential initiation by or identification with a single artist.[9] The latter attribute implies that para-institutions thusly associated with a single artist are not actual organisations and therefore there is a deceitful (whether intentional or not) or fake element to their alleged organisational status. Lütticken does not expand on this commentary which seems to be made in passing. I will attempt to associate it with strategic and self-branding issues which in turn pertain to artificiality. Furthermore, Lütticken suggests that by forging 'alliances' with institutions, para-institutions are prone to downgrading their institutional positionality of rejection and resistance to 'a purely strategic and pragmatic approach'.[10] However, as I have argued extensively in Chapter 3 and as I will further discuss in relation to mockstitutions, such an approach is not only unavoidable but also potentially effective as regards a desired resistance to dominant paradigms. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss the possibility that para-, alter- and mockstitutional modalities have been appropriated by reinvigorated far-right expressions and sentiments. I also examine the possible contribution of instituent praxis in this discussion.

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 9.

The New World Summit and the para-institutional

Some examples of para-institutions that Lütticken refers to include Ahmet Öğüt's the Silent University (discussed in chapter 4) and the New World Summit, a project initiated by the Dutch artist Jonas Staal in 2012.[11] The New World Summit defines itself as an artistic and political organisation which is 'dedicated to providing "alternative parliaments" hosting organizations that currently find themselves excluded from democracy.'[12] The project co-funds, facilitates and organises communication through public discursive events between organisations that are classified or listed as terrorist, such as the Kurdish Women's Movement, the Basque Independence Movement, the National Liberation Movement of Azawad and the National Democratic Movement of the Philippines and relevant experts including lawyers, diplomats, public prosecutors, judges, governmental advisors, international politicians, journalists, academics, students and artists. Staal's project regards these organisations as methodically excluded from the 'political order' in the name of 'democratism,' a perversion of democracy that aims at 'expansionist, military and colonial gains'.[13] The New World Summit largely takes the form of two-day summits – since 2012, these have taken place in Berlin, Leiden, Kochi, Brussels, Rojava, Utrecht and Oslo. It also constitutes an umbrella-organisation for sub-projects such as the New World Academy, the New World Embassy, the contribution to the construction of a public parliament building in Rojava and visual art/architecture exhibitions at various art institutions.[14] For the New World Academy, Staal in collaboration with BAK organised discursive/educational sessions (2013-2016) where representatives of political organisations such as the National Democratic Movement of the Philippines, the We Are Here refugee collective, and open-source advocates of

[11] Ibid., 8. F/SUW, Kunsthalle Athena, *Galéria Ganku* as well as other projects/institutions that I have discussed as discursive or experimental could also be seen as mockstitutions.
[12] 'New World Summit: About,' New World Summit, accessed June 8, 2018, http://newworldsummit.org/about/.
[13] Ibid.
[14] The project develops embassies (entitled *New World Embassies*) in collaboration with stateless states, autonomist groups, and blacklisted political organisations, which amount to architectural constructions aimed at discursivity and alternative forms of (stateless) democracy.

international Pirate Parties exchanged knowledge, produced work and discussed the potential of transformative politics through art along with students and artists.[15]

The New World Summit has used multiple and variable funding sources. For instance, *Stateless State,* the summit that took place in Brussels in 2014, was co-funded by the Royal Flemish Theater (KVS) in Brussels, the Mondriaan Foundation in the Netherlands and the Center for Visual Art in Rotterdam and was logistically supported by the Progress Lawyers Network and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) – both based in Brussels.[16] While the two latter are partnering organisations in that they offer useful resources of a logistical nature, the former organisations are (visual) art institutions (the Mondriaan Foundation offers public funding for visual art and cultural heritage). The new public parliament for the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava in northern-Syria (opened in April 2018) was co-financed equally by the autonomous Kurdish government and the New World Summit (through the Mondriaan Foundation, the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and income from sales of architectural models of the parliament).[17] It is also worth noting that partner organisations and funding bodies are visibly involved with the project's activity; their representatives participate in the summits 'with statements on their organizations, short lectures, or by chairing sessions.'[18]

The diversity of the funding sources that range from well-established European cultural institutions to militant political organisations classified as terrorist by international intelligence institutions reflects the fact that the New World Summit operates within a terrain where the artistic and the political merge even at the disciplinary institutional level. Staal has suggested that for the New

[15] 'New World Academy,' BAK online, accessed July 13, 2018, https://www.bakonline.org/long-term-project/new-world-academy/.
[16] Personal interview with Staal, 2016.
[17] Ibid. Since 2011 and the Syrian conflict, there has been an armed Kurdish-led struggle for autonomy and self-administration in the region of Rojava, promoting a (socialist) logic of confederation. The region has been de facto autonomous since 2016.
[18] Ibid.

World Summit 'the core of being an artistic and political organization' is 'to re-imagine art through a new politics, and to re-imagine politics through a new art.'[19] Staal maintains that new political visions are being proposed through the New World Summit; 'perspectives on alternative models of independence and autonomy' and 'claims on alternative world histories and understanding of existing structures of geopolitics' are being disseminated by participating speakers to other New World Summit participants and its publics.[20] At the same time, 'as artists, designers and architects,' the participants of the project also 'contribute to a new imaginary' that creates 'new designs and visualizations of assembly that result in [...] "stateless parliaments."'[21] Indeed, had not the project evoked its artistic nature, many of the summits could have been deemed illegal, persecuted from various authorities or excluded from funding sources.[22] Despite advocating the coincident nature of the artistic and the political, Staal's description betrays traces of the usual dual logic that associates the former with the domain of the imaginary and the latter with the domain of reality – resembling the art and life duality discussed in previous chapters. Before addressing the significance of reconstructing or articulating this duality in terms of the imaginary and the real, we should enquire into its potential affiliation with the particular qualities of the para-institutional.

According to Lütticken's logic, one could argue that the para-institutional aspect of the New World Summit lies in its parasitical or orbital relation to other usually more established or disciplinary institutions. The issue of legitimacy or legitimisation is often key here, especially when it is understood both in its ethical and in its legal function. For instance, the semantic function of the prefix para- in the meaning of para-military organisations would indicate an illegitimate or semi-legitimate but systematic institutionality situated alongside a legitimate one (legitimate military forces). Arguably, institutional legitimacy

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Regarding the The New World Summit's censorship and ban in the context of the 1st Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2012-2013) see: 'Part I: The Choreography of Censorship', New World Summit, accessed July 16, 2018, http://newworldsummit.org/news/invitation-new-world-summit-kochi/.

corresponds to a spectrum rather than the binary of legitimacy/non-legitimacy and thus, the para-institutional aspect exists within such spectrum. Altering legal frameworks can legitimate previously illegitimate or semi-legitimate para-institutions or legitimate previously legitimate ones. Moreover, cultural and ethical perspectives can legitimate officially illegitimate actions, or indeed, para-institutions, as well as de-legitimise officially legitimate ones. Such shifts range from globally historical turns, from international treaties to everyday actions, such as driving while having exceeded the drinking limit just by a small amount of alcohol units because of the personal/cultural discretion that abiding to the legal prescriptions in this instance would be pointless. In some social or art-world contexts, unpaid work, such as curatorial internships or participation in art exhibitions without payment, could be seen as a para-institutional practice that moves in a spectrum of legitimacy, understood both officially and ethically. In showcasing the fluidity between cultural, ethical and official legitimacy spectra, the New World Summit experiments with or moulds the variable of legitimisation, in terms of the semi-legitimate organisations involved, and by presenting everything also in an art context. The category of the para-institutional could be contributive in understanding ambiguous (art) projects such as the New World Summit, if it is granted that the prefix para- can be found in a spectrum of legitimacy that almost annihilates the quality of the fully legitimate, non-para-institution. It is arguably difficult to locate an example of an institution that has not developed any orbital or parasitical relationships to other institutions or that has consistently had widespread and absolute cultural, ethical, historical and official legitimacy. In order to further problematise the quality of the para-institutional, I consider two approaches on para-institutions irrelevant to art.

Para-institutions – exhibit A

> Para-institutionalism is a parasitic politics that is born of dissatisfaction with the enclosures we find ourselves in.

> Anarchists, communists, even liberals are like foreign agents that might suddenly spawn discontent and possible parasitic currents within an institution itself. Para-institutionalism co-opts the strength and organs of institutions toward a destratifying end. Coming from within, parasitic para-institutional agents might upset the duplication technology of an institution toward reproducing heterogeneously.[23]

This excerpt is taken from a short text entitled 'Instituting the para-institution', posted under the pseudonym of u/Proudhons_butt in the online community 'r/Radical Christianity' hosted by the platform Reddit.[24] The user argues that 'Radical Christians' could borrow from para-institutionalism in order to destratify the deep-rooted institution of the church and create the 'para-church' as 'an assemblage that learns to abide in heterogeneity and difference' and is 'mobile, agile and maybe nomadic.'[25] This might constitute a contemporary form of affirmation; the formal pattern of a para-institution that is mobile, agile and has the potential to heterogenise the powerful institution (church) is isolated and presented as progressive. The emancipatory potential of secularism is thereby precluded as a progressive option since what is oppressive about the church can be purportedly subverted in the realm of the para-institution.

Para-institutions – exhibit B

Leland Tabares regards corporations that provide funding schemes to universities as para-institutions to the academic institution. Tabares focuses on the case of Apple Inc. and argues that the company has used its financial support to *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)* as an excuse

[23] u/Proudhons_butt, 'Instituting the Para-Institution,' r/RadicalChristianity, Reddit, October 13, 2015, accessed July 18, 2018, https://www.reddit.com/r/RadicalChristianity/comments/3om3jp/instituting_the_parainstitution/.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

to veto one of its shareholders' proposition to advance some specific minority inclusion policies in senior management.[26] In this context, Tabares writes:

> By not pressuring these moments, we allow para-institutions to sustain their hegemonic processes in the name of the academy, thus turning the academy into a tool to be used by corporate entities and making the academy appear unfit to combat discriminatory practices outside of its own institutional contexts.[27]

It becomes clear that Tabares assigns the parasitical aspect of the para-institutional to the private mega-corporation. This automatically generates a power-asymmetry in favour of the para-institution, while Tabares seeks to redeem the category of the main, non-para-institution. Another perhaps more typical reading of the situation could uphold Apple Inc. as one of the most robust iterations of the dominant corporative model based on innovative technology, and the academy as a dependent institution and thereby, a para-institution, considering the alleged discriminatory actions as exploitative to the academy. Such reading would also be more aligned with Lütticken's implicit suggestion that the para-institution can carry a progressive potential towards challenging oppressive dominant paradigms. Arguably, given the reversibility of Tabares's reading, the ethical illegitimacy inscribed to the Apple Inc. policies by Tabares through an attribution to the para-institutional falls short of a generalisable sustained critique. Such a critique would be in need of further theoretical and historical tools.

Para-institutions – a decision

These two cases indicate that the para-institutional is limited to a schematic pattern that can be broadly applied to many types of relations between many different kinds of organisations, to the extent that it is questionable whether the

[26] For further information on HBCU, see: 'What is an HBCU,' White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, accessed July 16, 2018, https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/one-hundred-and-five-historically-black-colleges-and-universities/.

[27] Leland Tabares, 'The Contexts of Critique: Para-Institutions and the Multiple Lives of Institutionality in the Neoliberal University,' *Lateral*, no. 6.1 (Spring 2017), accessed October 2, 2018, https://doi.org/10.25158/L6.1.16.

para-institutional should be seen as potentially subversive in terms of power in an art institutional context. Lütticken's warning of a purely strategic and pragmatic approach is more than pertinent here; far from constituting simply an occasional danger for para-institutions, the para-institutional perspective itself can be reduced to pure strategy, if not tactic. Arguably, the para-institutional quality contributes in describing what is particular about case studies such as the New World Summit, mainly insofar as it underlines the function of legitimisation as a malleable parameter. Even though at this stage it tells us little about the relation in question between the imaginary and the real, the para-institutional alludes to the relevance of the spectrum of legitimisation, which could in turn be associated with an intervention into what should be just.

The blurred and uncertain character of this spectrum borders with Searle's notion of deontology as well as instituent praxis. Similar to a non-exclusively official or legal legitimisation, deontology as a quality particular to the institutional relates to perceived rights, obligations and power relations encountered within a cultural, ethical, official and legal pool of expectations that ebb, flow and emerge within the spectrum of legitimisation. It is however instituent praxis that places the focus on the production of a subjectivity which enunciates – consciously, collectively and creatively – the breaking of its own code and the self-institution of a new one. As Dardot and Laval have argued, instituent praxis refers to neither the legal officialisation of a pre-existing norm nor to norms that fall under customary law, as the latter merely reflects the unconscious transmission of ancient rules.

Mockstitutions as a broader imperative

In 2010, Greg Sholette coined the term mock-institutions or mockstitutions to describe recreated 'facsimiles of institutions' permeated by 'the

superimposition of reality and fiction, play and power.'[28] The case studies he discusses are art practices that mimic the 'administrative, affective, and intellectual power of institutions.'[29] Sholette refers to corporate, state and other kinds of institutional structures. Some of his key examples are the YesMen (Chapter 3) and the group/project Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK). NSK consists of Slovenian artists and groups of artists and musicians and was founded in Ljubljana in 1984, before the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ceased to exist (1992) and Slovenia became an independent state (1991). In 1991, NSK initiate NSK State, a self-proclaimed artificial state with 'fictive embassies in nearby countries' and an online passport-issuing service, which people have actually attempted to use for immigrating purposes.[30] Sholette refers to such artificial passports as 'parafictional documents' and regards NSK State as a 'paradoxical,' 'politically risky' and 'compelling' 'hacking into the official national imaginary.'[31] Similarly, the YesMen mockingly emulate corporate structures and identities and their practice is often underpinned by contextual commentary.

Two recent European small projects that could be added to Sholette's long list of mockstitutions are Let's Get Together and Call Ourselves an Institute (LGTACOAI), initiated in 2012, and the Institute for the Management of the Athenian Post-Documenta Melancholy (the Greek acronym is IDAMM), initiated in 2015. The former project is a group of five curators and art graduates mainly based in Scotland who comment sarcastically on the general proliferation of DIY or self-initiated institutions by adopting the ironic name Let's Get Together and Call Ourselves an Institute and by half-purposefully remaining inactive (until 2017), even though individually they were including the project in their art-field CVs.[32] Idamm operated through a public Facebook

[28] Gregory Sholette, 'Mockstitutions,' in *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 161.
[29] Sholette, 'Mockstitutions,' 152.
[30] Ibid. 158.
[31] Ibid. 158.
[32] Personal interview with Benjamin Fallon, 2016. The members of LGTACOAI were Emma Balkind, Luke Cooke-Yarborough, Julie-Ann Delaney, Benjamin Fallon and Kirsteen Macdonald. Their inactivity, which was partly due to practical and personal obstructions of the members, was briefly

page that during the period leading up to Documenta 14 assumed the identity of an interdisciplinary research institute that would assist in dealing psychologically with the aftermath of Documenta 14 in Athens. In February 2016, Idamm published a Facebook post in the form of a mission statement according to which in the context of Documenta 14:

> Athens is not being instrumentalized as a general example of failure, but as some sort of paradigm that has something to teach. The ignorant will become teachers, Greek artists will sell like hot cakes in the art markets and they will finally get to participate in exhibitions abroad. […] However there are also those who through spiteful reactions to what they call the neo-colonial, exoticist, hegemonic existence of the documenta, they mock the intentions of the organization, claiming that the indigenous artistic subjects are being reduced to trivago (www.trivago.com) by the professional art tourists, and so on.[33]

The detectable sarcasm throughout Idamm's Facebook presence suggests that the people behind it would actually side with the viewpoint that sees neo-colonialism and exoticisation in Documenta 14. However, as the page administrators remain anonymous and refuse to reveal their actual intentions, one can only take their proposition as what it presents itself to be, a parody of a research institute that purports to adopt a psychoanalytical approach to deal with the social aftermath of Documenta 14.[34] Through its parody, Idamm might have implied that such an institute has actually been necessary, given the perceived gentrifying shifts Documenta 14 would cause to the Athenian art community. It might have also sought to denounce the pseudo-intellectual and

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interrupted by an appearance of one of their texts in Prawn's Pee (organised by Rob Churm and Rebecca Wilcox), a small newspaper-publication and series of events in the context of the Glasgow International Festival in 2012. In October 2017, the inactivity was properly broken as LGTACOAI would transform into a six-month project (a resource space including archives, works and series of events) in the context of Chapter Thirteen, a Glasgow-based curatorial co-operative and project space also initiated in October 2017. Current members of Chapter Thirteen are Benjamin Fallon, James Hutchinson, Kirsteen Macdonald and Lesley Young.

[33] Idamm, 'Institute for the Management of the Athenian Post-documenta Melancholy (IDAMM),' Facebook, February 26, 2016, accessed May 5, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/idammathens/posts/153015061751043. Trivago.com is an online travel agency.

[34] Personal communication with the page administrators in May 2016 for the purposes of this research made it clear that they wanted to remain anonymous and that they were not willing to reveal any intentions other than the ones already made public on Facebook.

pseudo-scientific observational character of the discourse around Documenta 14, at a time when Athens is riddled with concrete social and financial problems which are supposedly amplified by Documenta 14. Idamm arguably exemplifies a very contemporary version of a mockstitution that not only employs online satire or caustic irony abundant in user-based platforms, but also manipulates the mannerisms of art discourse.

Even though Lütticken refers to the neoliberal condition and includes Casco which was initiated as early as 1990 in his discussion of alter-institutions, he does not draw explicitly distinct geopolitical or clear historical lines. His focus is rather the globally financialised art institution of the twenty-first century which ranges from peripheral areas to places of institutional hypertrophy. By contrast, Sholette situates explicitly his analysis within the 'post-industrial economy' and 'post-Fordist neoliberalism' which emerges 'after the post-war era of administered society.'[35] He also mostly refers to post-1989 case studies including Eastern European ones and argues relatedly that in some instances, the groups initiating the discussed practices are of a generation that has only ever directly experienced a corroded 'non-commercial public realm' and the associated concepts of 'affiliation, solidarity, or collectivity' as 'short term individual need' and usually through 'the distributed community of social networks.'[36] In short, mockstitutions deal with their own 'redundancy' through 'self-creation and mythification' and thereby flourish within societies whose 'previous forms of human connectivity' have eroded.[37] However, as I intend to argue, the quality of self-creation and mythification that Sholette considers paradigmatic of more or less art-related mockstitutions within a specific generational and geopolitical range is also extendable to the overall institutional landscape of the current global condition. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that the mockstitutional modalities (as well as para-institutions and alter-institutions as discussed by Lütticken) follow up many of the earlier

[35] Sholette, 'Mockstitutions,' 152-61.
[36] Ibid., 166.
[37] Ibid., 154.

methodologies of artistic Institutional Critique, as well as early twentieth century avant-gardes that ridiculed art-deontic conventions.

Sholette describes insightfully the mechanisms at play in the function of mockstitutions after having collected primary research data from art collectives globally (but mainly from Europe and North America). He captures accurately many of the practical aspects that instantiate the treatment of organisational and institutional form as medium. Such treatment involves a meta-moulding of semiotics and simulative fragments and the creative management of official/legal expectations and infrastructures. Sholette suggests that even though mockstitutions do not employ irony or parody 'for its own sake' as would be the case with a great amount of comedy, they are 'so indifferent to proper organizational structure that they adopt any convenient form of governance.'[38] They emulate and experiment with 'the intangible realm of organizational signification and embodiment' and engage in processes of 'self-branding' in order to manage their 'visibility' both within and outside the 'art world.'[39] Sholette considers our age one 'of overt deregulation and semiotic warfare' and symptomatic of the popularity of 'perfunctory compliance with official cultural regulators' among art-group strategies.[40] According to his observations, most groups are either deliberately uninterested in their legal status as organisations or are unregistered.[41] Furthermore, even those who are registered as 'for-profit' organisations usually operate 'collectively and ideologically against the marketplace.'[42] Sholette regards mockstitutions as turning 'aesthetic parafiction' into 'full-blown simulations of organizations even as their internal “moving parts” remain administratively deceptive and flexible.'[43] He argues that mockstitutions stage and enter a 'confidence game' between seemingly fixed institutions such as 'the state, city, corporation, prison, museum, school, even the European Union' and 'miniature replica[s] of

[38] Ibid., 161.
[39] Ibid., 153.
[40] Ibid., 163.
[41] Ibid., 162.
[42] Ibid., 163.
[43] Ibid., 156.

institutional cohesion and legitimacy.'[44] Mockstitutions also *win* the confidence game by being taken seriously when 'all the correct significations of organizational value are artfully displayed' while this 'manipulation of institutional sobriety' becomes the means of circumventing 'anticipated forms of behavior and disciplinary visibility within the increasingly hegemonic, entrepreneurial art market.'[45]

Sholette suggests that what is at stake with mockstitutions goes beyond the replication of organisations and institutional structure; mockstitutions transform the remnants of old failing or extinct institutions into 'an improved, second-order social reality extraordinaire,' as they 'use their virtual offices to confront and intervene in the real world of actual corporations, businesses, municipalities, and states.'[46] The real world and this so-called second-order reality are superimposed upon one another through 'the tactical plagiarism of institutional function.'[47] Rather than any (art) critical potential, Sholette often upholds this superimposition that creates a 'peculiar state of difference and similitude' as what is most engaging about mockstitutions.[48]

Crucially, however, he does comment on the role their art-world ties play in this peculiar state. Sholette suggests that mockstitutions have 'access' to an 'imaginative license' which is 'granted only to artists,' despite their tendency to avoid identifying as artists and their marginal positioning within various mappings of the art world.[49] Sholette paints a picture whereby in the twenty-first century the ‘leakage of imaginary institutions into the everyday’ has dramatically increased, even though ‘artfully crafted counterfeit realities have been migrating out of the art world and into the fabric of the everyday life’ since the Institutional Critique of the early 1960s, if not, I would add, since the early twentieth century avant-gardes.[50] Sholette does not equate the function of all

[44] Ibid., 169.
[45] Ibid., 169-70.
[46] Ibid., 153.
[47] Ibid., 169.
[48] Ibid., 166.
[49] Ibid., 167.
[50] Ibid., 156.

phases of Institutional Critique. For instance, he acknowledges that, operating predominantly from the 1990s onwards and participating directly within a commercial sphere, so-called 'meta-commercial' mockstitutions coincide practically with corporate and market-like activity to the extent that they vacate the type of Institutional Critique that maintains – or used to maintain – a clear ironic or critical aspect, even from a complicit art-institutional position.[51] Sholette also mentions the relatively recent increase in supply of unpaid labour on behalf of people wanting to establish themselves in the arts as a point of convergence between businesses and art institutions including 'alternative' ones.[52]

His description of mockstitutions introduces in great detail the inextricable relation between the artful display of organisational form, the simulative semiotics of self-image and the creative management of institutional structure that involves encrypted actuality. This relation showcases how organisation, management and self-branding can be interwoven with artistic or aesthetic practices, understood as producing affective knowledge. In turn, this interrelation constitutes an alternative response to the questions raised in Chapter 3; the duality of technological, or in this case managerial, infrastructure versus human free will, the former constructed as always already determinate and the latter as inherently indeterminate seems to fall through. Sholette's accentuation of the superimposition of reality and fiction and his reference to parafiction point toward the centrality of artificiality in relation to the instituent, not as the artificial versus the real but *as* the real. Arguably, instituent praxis could and should be actualised within a terrain where desire and affect are fused with administrative structures, channels of legitimisation and holograms of institutional sobriety.

Sholette, however, seems to remain captive to the idea that the mockstitutional modality is the exclusive privilege of art-world-marginal yet art-related small groups that are somehow reactive toward their redundancy and thus critical or

[51] Ibid., 163-66.
[52] Ibid.

accusatory of the dominant neoliberal system. This becomes particularly clear in his propositions that (a) there is an access to an imaginative license granted only to artists and (b) there is a monodirectional leakage of imaginary institutions from the art world to the everyday (strangely, despite his acknowledgement that the separation of the imaginary or the fictional and the real has become too awkward and unbefitting). Before unpacking these two propositions, I intend to argue that artificiality is not just a tactical weapon for art-related mockstitutions; rather, it is the condition of the real, in terms of a broadly understood institution-making. The current impromptu and tactical institutional creativity performed by the most otherwise known as stale, monolithic or powerful institutions, such as the state and the corporation, or supranational institutions, such as the European Union should not be overlooked or discarded as sterile or inert by default. Blatant examples could be the fast-paced institutional creativity of the European Union from the Lisbon Treaty (2007) to the GDPR (2018, discussed in Chapter 2) to the initiatives EDAL and ELENA of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles.[53] Moreover, the omnipresent mediascape of so-called alternative facts and fake news as well as the proliferation of counterfeit organisations oftentimes with the support of large-scale political campaigns should also be taken into account. This is important to stress because arguably insituent praxis should not discard any of these terrains, as they constitute the conditions out of which it can arise. Mutatis mutandis, it is useful to note that the Athenian democracy emerged amidst pre-existing and co-existing political systems of tyranny and monarchy and survived alongside slavery and other forms of social exploitation.

[53] EDAL is the European Database of Asylum Law and ELENA is the European Legal Network on Asylum. See: ʻECRE: homepage,ʼ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, accessed June 27, 2018, https://www.ecre.org/.

Instituent praxis, artificiality and the New World Summit

Rather than classifying specific practices into appropriate categories such as para-institutions and mockstitutions, I seek to identify possible terrains for instituent praxis within a diverse spectrum of practices. Sholette's description of mockstitutions adds to the analysis of the para-institutional. Even though the Silent University and the New World Summit (both initiated after 2010) are categorised by Lütticken as para-institutions, they bear strong resemblances with mockstitutions in terms of handling their self-image, moulding organisational structure, manipulating institutional sobriety and more broadly, constituting documents of the current condition of the real in its artificiality. Arguably, however, the New World Summit exceeds mockstitutions as they were discussed by Sholette and facilitates, through Sholette's propositions (a) and (b), the interrogation of the distinction between the real and the imaginary, and the co-extensive duality of the art-world and the everyday.

In her discussion of infrastructure Marina Vishmidt suggested that practices such as the New World Academy could be regarded as 'productive reversioning of artistic agency in the infrastructural mode' and as 'frontal assumption of political and economic sovereignty.'[54] In light of this interpretation, the New World Summit could be read as more propositional, straightforward and ambitious in scale and scope of reach comparing to many mockstitutions described by Sholette. On one hand, Staal's project is indeed a mockstitution as it critically – and in some respects, mockingly – manipulates, moulds and recontextualises through an art-world lens institutional structures such as the summit, the parliament, the state and lists of designated terrorist organisations. As Staal has argued, 'rather than formal models of the nation-state,' the proposed alternative parliaments are 'states of mind' that contribute to an 'ongoing series of imaginaries and performative understandings of what

[54] Vishmidt, 'Between Not Everything,' 267 (See Ch. 3, fn. 121).

a people is /could/should be.'[55] At the same time, however, the New World Summit operates in the straightforward terrain of political organisations and state politics that would not normally be thusly tied up to artistic or art-world practice. For example, it is highly doubtful whether there would be a parliament building for the Kurdish Autonomist Movement and whether it could have attained the levels of discursive exposure and networking with other politically neighbouring organisations and individuals, if it wasn't for an art project's facilitation and funding. Maria Hlavajova has similarly argued that the New World Academy's project with the We Are Here Collective that works with 'undocumented, undeportable refugees in limbo in the Netherlands' would also have otherwise been impossible.[56] This is not to suggest a messianic function for art, but rather to take note of the particularities of the reversioning of artistic agency that Vishmidt referred to, which allegedly portrays a 'desire for power in and over the real.'[57] Seen in this light, the New World Summit seems less ironic, more earnest and actual than other mockstitutions. This is probably however, a difference in scale rather than quality; all of the discussed projects are to different extents mocking as well as earnest/propositional. Is there however a difference in their relation to the real?

Sholette's proposition (a) is partly proven true; the New World Summit is indeed using a license granted only to artists since without it so many of these borderline illegal projects would have not been allowed, let alone funded. However, to what extent is this license due to art's exclusivity to the imaginative or the imaginary? Art's exclusivity to the imaginary is but another myth, upon which institutional edifices have been built and revolted against – not least by artistic avant-gardes. The myth is unsustainable at least in contemporary contexts, if we take into account the creativity of the largely uncertain, simulative and short-attention-based global mediascape, as well as institutional entities, ranging from shady algorithmic infrastructures to

[55] Jonas Staal (in conversation with Maria Hlavajova), 'World-Making as Commitment,' in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*, ed. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 673.
[56] Staal (with Hlavajova), 'World-Making,' 672.
[57] Vishmidt, 'Between Not Everything,' 267.

monetary funds and schemes, able and permitted to determine the course of history for populations of entire nations and international regions. However, this is not an acknowledgment nor a defence of creativity as an aspect of nominally non-art organisations, as that would reduce creativity to a fragmented and commodifiable understanding. Rather, if the imaginary is understood as part and parcel of the instituent aspect, i.e. as attached to the creation of the new and artificiality, then it reveals itself *as* the real. This realisation trivialises the search for those disciplines, fields or sectors that could monopolise the imaginary in the first place.

Sholette's proposition (b) according to which there has been a monodirectional leakage of imaginary institutions from the art world to the everyday should also be nuanced. Relatedly, Maria Hlavajova has suggested that the New World Summit makes use of 'what is left of artistic autonomy' in order to perform actual change and Staal has confirmed that simply relying on 'the notion of art as the *domain of the imaginary* […] leaves art to imagine everything but change nothing – in order for it to remain art.'[58] All of these articulations suggest that the autonomy of art or the art world from everyday life perceived as real life or reality is somehow preserved. Is the ideological edifice of the autonomous institution of art still alive and thus operative as an alibi for practices such as the New World Summit? As I have argued in Chapter 1, the ideological edifice of the autonomous institution of art as a unified sphere is refutable and the institutional aspect reflects many other factors apart from the ideological edifice of freedom from the means-end rationality. Even if it was granted that the artistic and the everyday as the real were once constructed as two distinct spheres, the leakage of imaginary institutions from the art world to the everyday can only legitimately refer to a historical transition partly traceable in twentieth century (neo)avant-gardes, that leaves the two spheres merged. Contemporary parafictional mock-institutions are a product of the art world as much as they are part of the non-art-world.

[58] Staal (with Hlavajova), 'World-Making,' 672. [emphasis added].

The modality of institutional construction that might have once resonated with a discourse around ideology could be rearticulated through a discourse of instituent praxis and artificiality. A pure and simple epistemological relation between concealment and disclosure on which ideology rests collapses, given the complexity, virtuality and heterogenesis (as the generativity of ontological otherness) of the terms and conditions of visibility and semiotics, which permeate the artificial real and instituent praxis. Therefore, references to remnants of art's autonomy should read as partial, virtual and molecular spectres of persisting autonomy rather than actual distinct spheres of ideological autonomy. Ideological construction presupposes the non-constructed or the less-constructed real, even as a (materialist) utopia, which is proclaimed as more 'real' or realist than whatever is idealised or affirmative. In the suggested theoretical framework of instituent praxis, such duality would be discarded and the real heralded as always already artificial even in its materialist realist utopian version. It is perhaps due to the virtual or spectral remnants of autonomy that the spectrum of legitimisation is allowed to widen and accommodate otherwise probably impossible or banned activity, as the New World Summit's practice indicates. That an identical practice could be taking place without carrying the label of art if the legal environment was different seems obvious, common knowledge. Crucially, however, the fact that the project proceeds without legal problems (with the exception of Kochi-Muziris Biennale) furthers and reconfigures processes of legitimisation in the artificial real. This observation does not intimate that the New World Summit should necessarily be seen as implementing instituent praxis. Advancing such proposition would entail a close psychoanalytic examination of the subjectivity involved (including all participating institutions and states, as well as possibly implicated observers) as a subject group. Crucially, this examination would have to trace an a-signifying rupture in a significational hierarchy; a rupture that would in turn take the form of a rule, as a commonly-produced legal quantum. My argument is instead concerned with instituent praxis as constructing the *possibility* of such a-signifying rupture, in line with an instituent micro-management of significational intensities and with a view to deontology.

Managing the visible as proto-legible: From the politics of display to the channelling of significational artificiality

Lütticken has argued that 'New World Academy,' a collaborative exhibition between Staal and BAK in Centraal Museum in Utrecht (2015), 'obscured any clashes between the conceptual grid and productive logic of Staal's practice and some of the participants' agendas' and 'glossed over the vagaries of exchange and co-production in favour of a clarity of presentation that shaded into quasi-corporate branding.'[59] The exhibition was a curatorial endeavour that combined a visual archiving of five New World Academy sessions that took place between 2013 and 2015 and works from the Centraal Museum collection selected by Staal. This postproduction, narrativising retrospective appears to be prone to a reductive or at least partial representation already because of its exhibitionary format. However, acknowledged partiality is not necessarily problematic; it is a common characteristic of all curatorial attempts that refer to past (discursive) events, since an unmediated representation of the past is impossible, and idealising, as an aim. Nonetheless, an argument could still be made about Staal's strategy opting for glossification, simplification and accessibility and obfuscating raw vagaries and internal clashes.

The recurring polarity between clear and accessible visibility and raw, conflictual obscurity could be further complicated. An issue could be raised about whether the exhibition's glossed presentation is part of a tactical mockstitutional modality that employs the dominant, specular regime of the art world as an encryption code so as not to jeopardise the actual summits, their funding and subsequently all the work that is done through them. In that case, this could be an example of visibility-as-encryption becoming a tactical tool that siphons the dominant spectacle-affiliated conditions of display in the art world. In other words, what is thereby showcased is the tactical cohabitation of visible

[59] Lütticken, 'Social Media,' 10.

(glossified, display-centric, spectacular) and invisible (awkward, self-contradictory, omissive, cryptic) qualities in the mockstitutional, propositional and perhaps instituent modality.

Staal writes:

> It's true we make use of the exceptional space that art grants for imagining our assemblies differently, at least in our part of the world. At the same time, that is a possibility not merely granted by art, but also by the organizations themselves. Whether it is the refugee collective We Are Here, the National Liberation Movement of Azawad, or the Kurdish Women's Movement, if they did not recognize art as a site of struggle, then these collaborations would never have taken place. To be sure, it is not just the institution of art that grants space to emancipatory politics; it's through emancipatory politics that the legitimacy and relevance of art is determined.[60]

Albeit maintaining the aforementioned duality about the institution of art as distinct to an emancipatory politics, Staal's statement betrays a self-organised handling and measuring of *legitimacy* and *relevance* in the significational ensemble advanced through the project/para-institution. In this significational understanding the visible is broken down to the proto-legible, to borrow Lütticken's analogy. Far from proclaiming art as the only messianic sphere where emancipatory politics can unfold, it could be argued that Staal and the participating organisations practise a management or a channelling –in the sense of repurposing and reorganising – of significational terms and conditions pertaining to the overlaps and congruences of the global art world, politics and diplomacy. Such practice becomes the basis for interventions in the contingencies and possibilities within these overlapping areas.

Mock-, alter-, para-institutions and the far right

By way of concluding this chapter, I want to inscribe para-institutional, alter-institutional and mockstitutional tactical qualities within a broader discussion

[60] Staal (with Hlavajova), 'World-Making,' 674-75.

that has raised concerns about far-right tendencies and their intensified expression in cultural, aesthetic and critical modalities, tropes and discourses, mainly after 2010. The aim is to explore how instituent praxis could be contributive in such discussion. Even though I refer to fascism and its relation to capitalism through Guattari's historicisation, my intention is not to examine the history or the political theory of fascism. Rather, I discuss the possibility that my hitherto analysis in this chapter and the prism of instituent praxis might help navigate or maneuver some operative aspects within fascism or other forms of authoritarian politics.

Irony, transgression and other modalities of 'non-conformity' have been discussed in terms of their proclivity to be co-opted by reinvigorated expressions of far-right politics, from overt fascism to the so-called alt-right or alt-light. For Angela Nagle, such expressions migrated (predominantly within a US context) from marginal corners of the internet and the para-philology of cult figures outside 'mainstream' politics to widely used online platforms, such as 4Chan (2003) and Reddit (2005). In such platforms, far right sentiments thrived in the form of aesthetic and discursive themes and tools, such as memes, trolling, pranks and name-calling. Nagle associates this development with the period leading up to 2012 and the containment of Occupy and other related insurrections across the globe, in which the aesthetic of anonymity and its online networked forms carried emancipatory potential.[61] In her reading, by operating through anonymous/pseudonymous usership, 4Chan and Reddit became an appropriate place for 'the rightist side of the culture' to unleash its 'expert style of anti-PC shock humor memes.' This was apparently concurrent with the retreat of 'the more libertarian left-leaning element within [4chan] culture' linked to 'state-spying and repression during the height of Anonymous's public profile from around 2010 to 2012.'[62] Nagle traces political shifts in the US since that period and makes a case for how 'transgression, subversion and counterculture, have turned out to be the defining features of

[61] Angela Nagle, *Kill all Normies: Online Culture Wars From 4Chan And Tumblr To Trump And The Alt-Right* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2017), 15-17.
[62] Nagle, *Normies*, 17.

an online far right that finds itself full of old bigotries of the far right but liberated from any Christian moral constraints by its Nietzschean anti-moralism.'[63] Nagle's ensuing call for the left is to disengage from 'the very recent and very modern aesthetic values of counterculture and the entire paradigm' and 'create something new.' However, her conception of the new is hardly named or outlined and can thereby conduce in sustaining what she calls 'the mainstream.'[64] At any rate, abandoning the currency of subversion and non-conformity is hardly conducive to anything other than the preservation of the general late capitalist status quo.

Other authors have examined (neo-)reactionary resurgences as possibly reproduced in post-internet art (online and offline). For instance, Larne Abse Gogarty has periodised this discussion as the aftermath of the global economic crisis of 2008. In this period, earnest cultural expressions of radical politics around gender, race and class were mainstreamed and pitted against 'not-so-ironic' 'anti-PC' fronts incubated in the expansion of *Vice* culture since the 1990s.[65] She suggests that Nagle has failed to address some of these continuities and nuances as part of a longer history of left politics and feminism. In terms of contemporary art articulations, which Gogarty sees as lendable to but not necessarily intentionally expressive of far-right ideologies, she identifies, on one hand, the recurrence of a poignant nihilism through a 'flat', 'unmediated' aesthetic. This involves the erasure of historical and social parameters and the promotion of seemingly natural combinations of 'ancestral' and futuristic elements. On the other hand, she observes a stream of diverse practices that favour irony, humour, play and pleasure, as well as a 'constantly metamorphosing' 'referentiality.' Memes are read in this light as an updated form of montage that allows for relationality, mediation and an appeal to transformation. Such qualities are typical of this second stream as opposed to

[63] Ibid., 103.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Larne Abse Gogarty, 'Coherence and Complicity: On the Wholeness of Post-Internet Aesthetics' (Lecture at *Propositions #4: Unpacking Aesthetics and the Far Right*, BAK, Utrecht, March 17, 2017, accessed March 6, 2019, https://vimeo.com/266048660). *Vice* started as a print magazine in 1994. It has been known for provocative and politically incorrect content, especially in the late 1990s.

the flat, unmediated one. Even though this metamorphosing, mediated category is not didactic and does not point towards an idealised 'modelling of social transformation,' Gogarty sees in it the potential to hint at 'how capitalism permeates and has the capacity to infiltrate relations but also not to entirely access them or to access them partially and strangely.' This stream of practices indexes a system that is 'degraded and breaking down, constantly stitching itself back together, as people living within it have forms of relationality that are both dominated by capital but also try to move outside it.' Gogarty suggests that the 'sense of exuberance' amidst an underwhelming, 'gross' and 'melting' reality are crucial to this indexical effect. Thus, she is skeptical of both Nagle's 'peculiar faith to the mainstream' and the dismissal of the whole ground of counterculture as a 'banal or infantile transgression.' Such dismissal, Gogarty argues, would unnecessarily forgo the potential for iterations of montage that allow for mediation and the implication of history and relate to 'pleasure, tactility and the feminine as a contested field.' 'Irony is not latently fascist,' she notes, 'nor is transgression.'

In this debate, I want to annotate the modalities that feature in the discussed practices, as they might be akin to mock-institutional, alter-institutional and para-institutional ones; especially so, the more such modalities are historically encountered away from traditional (neo-)avant-garde contexts and closer to meta-commercial/no-outside ones. The ironic mimicry or mocking similitude involved could be seen as part of wider threads of cultural practices that open themselves out to far-right appropriations. As Gogarty has intimated, irony, subversion and non-conformity in montage-like techniques do not inherently or latently point to the far right, as long as they refrain from the flattening of historicity and the cancellation of the potential for social transformation. However, the value or currency of transgressive criticality or non-conformity as such, and as a possible (overarching) force within mock-, para-, and alter-institutional modalities, should arguably be further problematised and defended against a hypothesised latency towards the far-right. This is because it is precisely this currency that oftentimes *draws* people to far-right or authoritarian ideologies.

Morgan Quaintance has argued that, apart from the common association of the rise of such ideologies or para-philologies and para-practices with the 'stereotypical disenfranchised, alienated lack of prospects within a fragmented society' and the search for a 'unified identity or history,' there is another important aspect at play.[66] This relates to a sort of 'intellectual curiosity' that Quaintance has identified as active in the 'cultic milieu.' The latter refers to a discursive/practical complex that includes alt-right, neo-fascist and 'neo-reactionary conspiracy theories' akin to 'ancient para-mythologies, gnosticism and white supremacy.' This complex thrives on a 'need to go back to some past, long gone epochal system,' often instantiated in 'elements of ancient Greek antiquity' and 'para-religious storytelling.' Importantly, Quaintance suggests that people who are drawn to this 'seek for a different intellect to what they perceive as mainstream. They fall for alternative knowledge due to the prior assertion that what is being taught officially or traditionally or through education or mainstream media is a system of imposed ignorance.' At the same time, he asserts, their ultimate drive is one of feeling, (i.e. 'it feels right,') rather than an evidence-based, 'skeptical, logical [or] critical process.'

This condition is reminiscent of the inversions/perversions of parrhesia that I examined in Chapter 4. Parrhesia, as the polemic and risk-involving form of truth-telling to power and self-knowledge, could be schematically assimilated to the risk-involving and polemical impulse against what is perceived as mainstream and imposed structures of knowledge. This assimilation is flawed because in the cultic milieu there is no test, investigation or self-inquiry, in the sense of a learning practice that cares for the self and others. In cultic beliefs and systems of knowledge, truth is seen as a position rather than a drive. The subject's relation to truth and the self is fixed and unwilling to admit a truth-telling that would unsettle this fixed relation towards self-knowledge. This is evident even in conspiracy theories such as Flat Earth, eloquently investigated in the documentary *Behind the Curve* (2018) directed by Daniel J. Clark.[67] The

[66] Morgan Quaintance, 'Our Cultic Milieu' (Lecture at *Propositions #4: Unpacking Aesthetics and the Far Right*, BAK, Utrecht, March 17, 2017, accessed March 6, 2019, https://vimeo.com/266048694).
[67] Daniel J. Clark, *Behind the Curve* (Los Angeles, CA: Delta-v Productions, 2018; Netflix, 2019).

documentary features Flat Earth believers/subscribers (Flat Earthers) conducting DIY experiments in order to draw their own conclusions away from the influence of mainstream scientific/political institutions. Even though their experiments consistently disprove their beliefs, Flat Earthers persist with their cause: to never unsubscribe from their fixed form of truth, despite all the counterevidence which themselves create. Flat Earthers feel safer in their own fixed knowledge and failed 'investigation,' as opposed to the subject-producing and self-caring knowledge that denounced established structures, disciplines or institutions of human science might be active in a form of truth-telling. As *Behind the Curve* denotes, such institutions might in turn invert parrhesia themselves, in ways that relate with disciplinary control, market orientation and the development of exclusionary norms, thereby becoming the currency that the Flat Earthers seek to alter. In doing so, however, they are driven by what 'feels right' and they evince known psychoanalytic behavioural patterns, as psychologist Dr Per Espen Stoknes and psychiatrist Joe Pierre suggest in the documentary. In terms of subjectivity, knowledge/power and truth-telling, it could also be argued that the implicated subject subscribes to a new but fixed knowledge/power, while truth-telling as the revaluation of the currency of self-knowledge is ignored.

This issue could be reframed particularly in relation to para-institutional or alter-institutional qualities, in that they point to semi-legitimate or alternative (knowledge) structures or institutions, which, articulated through a micromanagement of proto-legible signification and processes of legitimisation, possibly preserve a critical potential, but could also be appropriable by authoritarian systems of knowledge or anti-emancipatory politics. The aforementioned 'Radical Christianity' post on Reddit could be an example of this. In its employment of the para-institution and the language of emancipatory politics towards tolerance within a particular institutional form (church) of Christianity, this post, arguably, assumes that the heterogeneity inserted by the schema of the para-institution could compensate for the anti-emancipatory and patriarchal moments in the discourses and institutions of Christianity. Unlike the heavily historicised and theorised concept of Foucault's

parrhesia, the tactical schema of the para-institution is far more lendable to such appropriations. For this reason, I employ instituent praxis and the Guattarian framework in order to analyse whether and how fascism and by extension other anti-emancipatory ideology might be latent in instances that resemble critical, parrhesiastic truth-telling, insofar as they attempt to break with forms of power and employ modes of ethos and the psyche.

In 1973, long before these contemporary historical developments, Guattari discussed fascism and its permutations as 'microfascism' or 'new forms of molecular fascism' in relation to his conceptions of desire, which could be understood in the context of desiring machines, as these have been discussed in previous chapters.[68] Guattari draws a distinction between fascism and capitalist totalitarian machines, both of which in some senses respond to the workers' 'potentiality for desire.'[69] Capitalist totalitarian machines 'divide, particularize, and molecuralize the workers' and their subjectivity; capitalism is afraid of mass movements and 'confines' them in economic or localised terms.[70] The totalitarian machine of capitalism is on the lookout for 'structures capable of *adapting* desire to the profit economy.'[71] More broadly, the 'micropolitical economy of desire' that Guattari examines is 'inseparable from the evolution of the productive forces.'[72] In fascism, however, at least in its German and Italian iterations that culminated in World War II, a 'fantastic collective death instinct,' was activated in the *masses*, as they 'reterritorialised' their 'desire onto a leader, a people, and a race,' so as to 'abolish a reality which they detested.'[73] The 'minimum of economic solutions' that the fascist regimes promised or offered are seen as inconsequential comparing to this instinct and the reterritorialised desire of the masses – a complex which

[68] Félix Guattari, 'Everybody Wants to be a Fascist,' in *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972-1977*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2009), 171. (Original conference lecture in 1973.)
[69] Guattari, 'Everybody Wants,' 169.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 171.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 168.

combined representations of ‘love and death’ and is present in ‘all fascist meanings.’

Referring to the ‘technical machines and economic systems’ of the time of his writing (1973), he argues that ‘it’s because their mode of production is forced to carry out this liberation [of increasingly greater fluxes of desire], that the forms of repression are equally incited to become molecularized.’[74] Guattari alludes here to the close entwinement of the ‘deterritorialised’ driving forces of production in capitalism (such as, industrial and post-industrial shifts) with ‘new forms of molecular fascism […] in familialism, in school, in racism, in every kind of ghetto.’[75] Guattari seems to suggest that even though the exacerbation and culmination of fascism in a *massive* murderous and suicidal thrust possibly threatens a given form of the capitalist system, there is a crucial common thread between capitalism and fascism in terms of their channeling of desire.[76] This relates to what Guattari calls ‘Oedipalization’ or the ‘chasing of desire back into familialism.’[77] Oedipalisation refers to any ‘personological’ psychoanalytic framework that includes the conjugal parental form or remains within interpersonal or intrafamilial relations. It also refers to any sociological or historical interpretations of structures as causations of such frameworks. In line with his thinking on desiring machines, Guattari hopes for an emancipation of desire as a ‘nonhuman transsexuality […] established in the social realm […] through a multiplicity of material and semiotic fluxes,’ as a possible alternative to the conundrum that sees ‘the entire individual libidinal economy clos[ing] back onto itself.’[78] This possibility is found in asignification; signifying semiologies ‘cut desire off from the real,’ as they dominate over ‘asignifying fluxes’ – the ‘semiotic practices which use signs in order to *transform* the real and which constitute, precisely, the privileged site for the investment of desire in the social arena.’[79] Thus, Guattari suggests that ‘desire is inseparable from

[74] Ibid., 175.
[75] Ibid., 171.
[76] Ibid., 168.
[77] Ibid., 173.
[78] Ibid., 172.
[79] Ibid., 174.

the existence of semiotic chains of all kinds, and at the same time, it has nothing to do with the redundancies of significant semiologies, with dominant mental representations and repressive interpretations – except when it invests them as such in a fascist-Oedipal micropolitics.' Put simply, (a) desire is irreducibly present in signification but its emancipated potential form is contained and confined by the redundancies of significant semiologies and repressive interpretations and (b) in (micro)fascism, desire breaks from such confinement through an exacerbated love and death complex, which is, at the same time, reinvested into (a micropolitics of) the same kind of Oedipalised significant semiologies.

This significational glitch is what could be at play in far-right micro-instances of co-opted irony or transgression. If irony, transgression and other counter-cultural tropes attempt to disrupt the redundancies of significant semiologies, in the hope of emancipating (transformative) desire, it is not surprising that their fascist, authoritarian and esoteric anti-emancipatory iterations hijack such psychosocially loaded methods. However, the latter are geared towards reinvested Oedipalised semiologies, whose drives are deadly or stagnating rather than transformative. Moreover, such iterations draw their impetus from a desire-driven disruptiveness towards or diversion from what they perceive as mainstream, which at times includes capitalist motors or symbols, but rarely capitalism as such in all its contradictions – at least not in fascist, cultic understandings. Indeed, this impetus reterritorialises the redundancies of significant semiologies, but only to reshuffle them in an Oedipalised context. Cultic beliefs and fascist or authoritarian discourses cannot bear the proper place of critique, as the process of courageous truth-telling and caring for the self as caring for others, nor the unsettlement and indeterminacy this process brings to the Oedipalised, pre-determined and fixed subject-object relations of desire, knowledge and power. An important distinction has then to be drawn between irony or similar methods, contexts and discourses ascribing to a machinic assemblage of enunciation and generating diverse and multiple ontology and virtuality, to those that fail to do so. As Guattari explains, it is not a matter of 'magically denying signification by rendering language absurd and

falling back into the techniques of word play, […], but of placing semiotic systems in conjunction with each other, beginning with asignifying semiotics […].'[80]

Thus, we return to the context of instituent praxis and the implicated production of subjectivity and creation of signification, framed through autopoiesis, heterogenesis and an abstract machinic asignification. It is in a thusly conjunctive, ethico-aesthetic and instituent configuration, that mock-, alter-, para-institutions should seek to ascribe to even in their micro-scale of (ethical) legitimisation and proto-legible semiotics. It might be difficult to see how such assemblages could be prevented from mutating into microfascism, given that a micropolitics of desire is acted out within semiotic virtualities and in a spectrum of de/legitimisation as rule-making. But as Guattari's framework hints at, the crucial, decisive aspect would rest on autopoiesis or the production of a machinic, pre-personal and pathic proto-subjectivity, that would not close back onto a libidinal economy of human individuation and would not switch itself off from a constant process of heterogenesis. It is such processes of subjectivity that instituent praxis involves, crucially, in its *conscious nomos-producing* elements that reflect new significations – not necessarily as new signifiers, but as new enunciative cartographies that involve asignification. In rejecting transgression, irony, divergence, there is the implicit presupposition that these have upgraded to despotic signifiers hinging on oppressive meanings. However, this function is only partially operative; beyond it, irony, montage, non-conformity and mediating counterculture can be conducive to truth-telling that aims at (self-)transformation. In other words, they can participate in the crafting of significational and asignificational micro-assemblages towards a new code, accordant with the desire of an emergent subjectivity, which is ontologically and historically generative, rather than reinvested in identitarian commonality, Oedipalisation and the exacerbation of death instincts.

[80] Ibid., 173.

Conclusions

In this thesis, I have elaborated and expanded on the concept of instituent praxis and its relation to power in the context of the European art world and its porous instances with a broader contemporary condition. The analysis has included a diversity of case studies in an attempt to move beyond – or in the crossings of – neat typologies that couple theoretical concepts with specific categories of instituent, or otherwise institutionally experimental, practices as actualisations of the concepts. Such typologies risk leaving no room for the consideration of potentially excluded (categories of) practices, or, conversely, reducing the proposed concepts to the particularities of practices. Possible examples of this could be MACBA in terms of New Institutionality, L' Internationale and alter-institutionality, Rooseum, NIFCA and others in the case of New Institutionalism, or even Park Fiction in the case of instituent practices. To some extent this is inevitable, insofar as it is a symptom of the curatorial/discursive art world, whereby often the aim is precisely to self-historicise one's own practical engagement, by naming it in a new, theoretical/conceptual light. Thus, even though I have not avoided explicitly discussing such case studies or strands of practices, I have tried to complicate their position in the discourse. Chapter 5, which considered and furthered the geopolitical remit of (the discourse around) institutionally experimental projects-institutions in Europe, and Chapter 6, a commentary on typologies of alter-, para-, and mock-institutions, have specifically responded to such concerns, albeit from different angles. This final section comprises three parts that summarise some of the main conclusions from individual chapters and articulate propositions and arguments extracted from the thesis overall. Contributions to the discipline and suggestions or openings for further research are annotated.

From the art institution to instituent praxis

In addressing the relation of art and its institutions or art as an institution, I have problematised the polarity of art against reality or everyday 'life praxis', as it features in accounts of (neo)avant-garde and Institutional Critique intents. I have discussed Bürger's understanding of the institution of art as the prevalent definition(s) of the social function of art in its historical contingence. He has diagnosed a clean-cut affirmative function, which sees the ideologically constructed institution of art in bourgeois society as an entire autonomous sphere of imagination, efficiently inconsequential to reality or 'life praxis', albeit critical to the means-end rationality that pervades such praxis. I have complicated his postulation through a few suggestions:

- Art and real life praxis are not two clearly demarcated spheres, awaiting for their sublation, as I have discussed through Foster. Art in the contemporary as well as its institutional elements act upon the everyday and the real in various ways; not least by being fully enmeshed in and governed by market forces, as I have argued through Andrea Fraser. It is from within the latter condition, which also denotes the subjective subsumption of labour under capital, that immanent critique is possible.

- If affirmation persists as a function, it operates at a micro-level: it is hardly referred to a single and all-encompassing sphere as institution, resting on a clear division between the real and the imaginary. Affirmation is also a methodologically problematic concept, in that it requires a hidden quality in order to operate – one that is, however, visible only to those who explore its function, and, at any rate, conceived in its structure to never be adequately exposable.

- Bürger's definition of the institution of art as the prevalent definition of art's social function in its historical contingency is closer to what is at stake with institutional ontology, in marking an ideological *prevalence*. Through Buchloh, I have shown that the institutional pertains to administrative, legalistic and economic power as well as linguistic and discursive convention. Visibility as

specularity and its imbrication with subjectivity are also relevant in power complexes made of norms and conventions.

- I have argued that the process of canonisation through repetition does not exhaust the meaning of institutionalisation. There is more to the institution than norms and conventions, even though deontology – power relations, rights, obligations, collectively accepted systems of rules – is characteristic of the institution.

If Fraser draws the art institutional line in its coincidence to discourses, Raunig has sought for a non-dialectical way out of purely negating or affirming the institution, in terms of positions of complicity. Raunig regards instituent practice(s) as performing a propositional self-instituting that constantly strives against structuralisation, without deludedly aiming at the latter's abolition. Even though my line of argument agrees with Raunig's intention, his theorisation of instituent practice(s) or process(es) goes hand in hand with his use of Hardt and Negri's concept of constituent power, aspects of which Dardot and Laval's instituent praxis moves away from. Moreover, the precise relationship of Raunig's concept of the instituent to the constituent lacks theoretical specificity and tends to evaporate within the particularity of practices, such as occupations, alongside Hardt and Negri's constituent. Instituent praxis is then defined as the process that involves the co-production of historically new significations that aspire to become rules of law and the concurrent production of a non-preexisting collective subjectivity. Instituent praxis goes beyond legislative and governmental (explicit) power, in that it refers to the creation of deontic significations, i.e. what could be conceived of and agreed upon as just by and for a collective subjectivity.

Through Guattari's (later) writing, I expand on the aspects of subjectivity in order to include machinic (technical and abstract), pre-personal, nonhuman and pathic/affective iterations. Relatedly, the production of new significations is referred to the realms of asignification, desire and machinic assemblages of enunciation. These productive and creative processes of subjectivity and enunciation should not be seen as simple caveats, but as crucial and

constitutive within instituent praxis, whose aspect of artificiality – as opposed to spontaneity or naturalness – is key. Guattari's core understanding of the real as artificial is central to my argument and relates to my expansion of instituent praxis. Guattari's two main principles, autopoiesis and heterogenesis are in line with this. They permeate these incorporeal, virtual, ontogenetic as well as corporeal universes, by promoting the reappropriation of the means of production of subjectivity, through processes that constantly generate dissimilarity and thwart linear homogenising transcendental archi-writings. Guattari writes:

> Capital smashes all other modes of valorisation. The Signifier silences the infinite virtualities of minor languages and partial expressions. Being is like an imprisonment which blinds us to the richness and multivalence of Universes of value which, nonetheless, proliferate under our noses. There is an ethical choice in favour of the richness of the possible, an ethics and politics of the virtual that decorporealises and deterritorialises contingency, linear causality and the pressure of circumstances and significations which besiege us. It is a choice for processuality, irreversibility and resingularisation.[1]

Such are the modalities of autopoiesis and heterogenesis: ethico-aesthetic, virtual, processual, irreversible and resingularising. Such is also the modality of the new. In Castoriadis, the unconscious creation of the radically new that did not pre-exist in representation is the action of the social/historical as a force participated by no-one in particular. Dardot and Laval assign to this function an emerging conscious subjectivity, which is conceived in the post-structuralist psychoanalytic terms set by Guattari. Subjectivity in instituent praxis does not pre-exist and is produced through autopoiesis and heterogenesis in and through the praxis. It is also worth noting that Guattari's engagement with the possible moves beyond the affirmation/utopia duality. His insight into the blinding – rather than the hidden – condition of Being and hierarchies of value is non-authorial. The possible is addressable through an ethical choice rather than an inaccessible Enlightenment.

[1] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, 29.

Labour, infrastructure and instituent praxis

I have attempted to chart a partial economics for instituent praxis – in terms of exploring the *nemein* of the artificiality of the possible and the virtual – that highlights and crosses the art world in its porosity with broader social realities. Instituent praxis eludes the polarity between withdrawal from and engagement with (art) institutions, and moves beyond naïve spontaneous, direct action as prefiguration; too-literal (or too-concrete) takes of autonomist exit; as well as liberal institutional reforms. The perspective of instituent praxis is compliant with reclaiming and not withdrawing from art institutions. Fisher's call for indirect action involving a managerial and organisational approach for Leftist fronts, so that they both reclaim and govern even hitherto neoliberal institutions, resonates with instituent praxis, which does not simply theorise forms of dissensus but also outlines the institution (as creation of new constitutive rules) of the political principle of the common. Unlike Mouffe's agonism that accentuates the strife between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces, instituent praxis elucidates the *creation* of new possibilities, which are not reducible to counter-actions to existing hegemony within and beyond the art world.

Engaging with art institutions crucially entails exploring their back office, apart from their programming, in terms of artistic, creative and administrative labour together with managerial and organisational structures and their associated hierarchies. Research into the back-office infrastructure of art institutions should consider synergies with a broader, non-art-world repoliticisation of the workplace, that would involve reimagining institutional forms of unionisation and collectivisation of labour. Relevant art/activist practice that examines the organisation of artistic labour, whereby exploitation and unpaid work tend to thrive, is encountered across Europe – the examples used in the thesis are drawn from the UK (Carrotworkers, Precarious Workers Brigade, Future Interns), Poland (Free/Slow University Warsaw, the Consortium for Postartistic Practices), or are international (Artleaks). Eichhorn's *5 weeks, 25 days, 175*

hours reveals the inertia of the infrastructure of the automated non-profit gallery, in its quirky response to unwaged labour, and its plea for the value of not labouring and the waging of producing nothing. Her work also implicates work hierarchies and their interrelation with managerial constraints. Documenta 14 and its managerial/economic shortcomings, despite its mindfulness of labour hierarchies and conditions, indicate the importance and fragility of the back office of the art institution.

I have discussed Francke and Jardine's predicate for the administrator as creative subject, based on the hypothesis that technological standardisation deprives administrative work of its authorship. Administrators turn into maintenance infrastructure for deserving subjects that participate in the public arena authorially and creatively. The repoliticisation of work should take into account this proposition, in its common ground with domestic labour, which is also invisible to and taken for granted by deserving subjects. However, such tactical demands should not be seen as theoretically generalisable. For instance, visibility in itself is not necessarily emancipatory; apart from specularised aspects, it can also coincide with an infrastructure of surveillance, of the logic of the panopticon, which can be limiting and oppressive to marginalised subjectivities (such as women dependent on interrelated systems of welfare and prison), in disciplining them individually and depriving them of any access to the eye of power. This observation is extendable to art institutions which, in seeking to experiment with institutional form, cannot afford to comply with the transparency and due diligence requirements of funding bodies – an issue thematised by the NIFCA-affiliated exhibition project Opacity.

Moreover, administration in itself is not identical with tediously standardised infrastructure and can be fully imbricated with creation, even if, in capitalism, this translates into strategic innovation for the market. This creation/innovation is what drives and moves private profit and the whole (techno)capitalist global economy. It is this creative momentum that anything alternative to capitalism should seek to reclaim, in different terms, but out of given conditions. Algorithmic institutional governance points to the reduction of the code (in

software) to the law of a privately administered logic, evidenced in contexts ranging from the nominally public contemporary art museum of a European capital to the EU regulatory framework GDPR. If, even in hypothetical scenarios of nationalisation of technocapitalist oligopolies/monopolies, any agency seems to ultimately lie with capital forces, it is because subjectivity, desire and creation are not adequately mobilised towards instituent praxis. The latter opens up a theoretical framework from which to conceive of, imagine and realise democracy as autonomy or the political principle of the common as curatable and creatable and as *code* enunciated consciously by subjectivities-in-the-making. Instituent praxis takes the form of a conscious non-causal resingularisation which is, nonetheless, conditioned by unconscious phantasms and stereotypical pasts. Given, capitalist, oversignifying conditions are not to be hopelessly repressed or negated, or even regulated ad hoc. The proposition of instituent praxis, autopoiesis and heterogenesis is an enunciation of code and desire that should be able to institute a reality beyond the capitalist abduction of desire and the marketisation of the means of production of subjectivity.

Through Irit Rogoff, I have advocated for an *affective* or asignificatory understanding of infrastructure, that heterogenises its reduction to functionality. This has been pertinent to my examination of art institutional experimentation in the context of a European semi-periphery. In tracing the geopolitical gaps and power asymmetries in (the discourse of) such experimentation, I have invoked the concept of semi-periphery as one that apprehends the relativity of positionality ensuing from the amalgamation of desire and legitimisation in the complex mechanisms of seduction and discipline. For instance, in the cases of Vector and Kunsthalle Athena different *perceptions* of 'big' or core infrastructure led to different institutional formations and responses, which cannot be reduced to the different economic or material conditioning. Many of the discussed case studies in the European semi-periphery could be seen as indexing an affective take of institutional infrastructure. Vector and Periferic Biennial experimented with art institutional infrastructure of a range of visibility and public engagement, in a negotiation

with the Romanian context of Iași. Kunsthalle Athena toyed with the affective connotations of Kunsthalles and Kunstvereins. *Galéria Ganku* commented on institutional insufficiency by ironically imagining a private gallery on a mountain peak in a state socialist context, while displaying the psychosocially relevant (dis)identification with this institutional context and its Western-capitalist institutional externality. Muzeum Sztuki's historical landmark of a collection was an artist-led project-institution all along, built on friendship and avant-garde camaraderie networks. Artists at Risk is a paradigmatic case of logistical and infrastructural enactment that grew out of biopolitical, affective and creative considerations and conditions. Relatedly, CAMP's institutional experimentation goes beyond New Institutionalism's generous social engagement with the community, as permissible by art structures. CAMP's infrastructural experimentation is first and foremost driven by affect and the effects of biopolitical displacement, whereby art is supplementary.

However, the full nexus of instituent praxis indicates that what is at stake in such cases is not simply an ethico-aesthetic take of functional or non-functional infrastructure, but highly propositional deontologies as well as subjectivity-forming relations, taking into account the hierarchies and (discursive) power relations active through the condition of the semi-periphery. Muzeum Sztuki and Galeria Ganku point to discursive omissions of *historicity*, which are highly active in – but not causing – the real institutional experimentation with and creation of one's self-positioning. Collection Collective speculates and experiments with collective, worker-led and self-organising forms of owning and collecting. The Consortium for Post-Artistic Practices channels art affiliation into direct anti-fascist, pro-refugees, feminist, and pro-workers mobilisation. It also experiments with forms of distributing authorship between the collective's members and the collective itself. Artists at Risk have crafted legal avenues for excluded creative subjects, tapping into new deontic powers and desire at once. Arguably, this is irreducible to humanitarian aid (and to propositional/experimental infrastructure), not because the excluded subjects are creative, in the narrow sense, and therefore

deserving, but because the project points to the possibility of co-producing new or heterogenetic significations as deontologies.

Discourse, power and instituent praxis

I have argued that the perspective of instituent praxis can also contribute in examining discursivity and knowledge production in the art world in a number of fashions. To unravel this contribution, I have considered the broader discursive context in the art world and referred to practices of diverse formats – from small-scale university-projects, which rethink experimentally and propositionally the form of the educational institution par excellence, to large-scale and long-term transnational research projects such as Former West. Through Kompatsiaris, Sheikh, Aguirre and Rogoff, I have traced some of the ways in which discursive practices, despite their democratising intentions or radicalising discursive contributions of variable degrees and the challenge they have posed to the object-based and specular exhibition form, continue to subscribe in the exhibitionary/curatorial complex. Thus, they perpetuate the art world as a huge exclusive and exclusionary conversation around visual excitements, displayable objects or other consumables, including consumable knowledge. This could be attested by the reception of Documenta 14 which sidelined the importance of the long-term grass-roots and largely discursive public programme 'The Parliament of Bodies', and focused instead on accusations of neo-colonialism.

Sheikh has discussed this condition by referring it historically to the (art) institutional function of the exhibitionary complex which is at once pedagogical, mediational and curatorial. He argues that this power/knowledge and desire-transferring function, apart from disciplining and correcting, also gives access to the viewpoint of power. It can thereby create a public *en masse*, insofar as the latter becomes conscious of itself as such. Thus, for Sheikh, the art institutional function essentially entails the articulation of a mode of address

that produces publics. In addressing the historical and theoretical decline of a singular public sphere that gives way to counterpublics, Sheikh has called for reimagining modes of address, along the lines of a conflictual rather than consensual understanding of the art institution. I have referred to the danger that lies in this invoked agonistic approach, which stages the conflictual pluralisation of discourse according to a parliamentary model and risks turning into a formulaic blueprint or an empty signifier for democracy. Even if Sheikh's suggestion is interpreted as identifying the art institutional function with a self-producing of publics, i.e. art institutions *are themselves* publics or counterpublics, it remains unclear how a new mode of address would be uttered as institutionally creative production of a non-preexisting subjectivity, unless the theory of instituent praxis is employed.

My analysis of the concept of the public sphere and notions of counterpublics has contended that, by ultimately depending on commonality or at least concreteness of needs/interests, publics are susceptible to market identificatory mechanisms, despite caveats of pluralisation and conflict. The subjectivity involved in instituent praxis posits instead the production of dissimilarity and resingularisation according to heterogenesis. Crucially, far from rejecting the necessity of emancipatory causes against specific forms of social exclusions that are often instantiated in counter-publics, the postulate of instituent praxis and its adjacent production of subjectivity is a parallel one; it suggests that unappropriability has to be instituted artificially and that it should also be defendable without being tied to any form of natural or naturalised belonging. Instituent praxis involves the creation of deontic significations by a non-preexisting subject, which is only tied by co-obligation and co-operation in the context of such creation.

Another approach in response to some of the aforementioned discursive art world's predicaments – object-based and specular primacy, consumable knowledge/power, the obfuscation of labour in art institutions – has invoked Foucault's theoretical constellation around parrhesia and Cynicism. This invocation has often taken the form of an advocated direct instantiation of such concepts within instituent (discursive) practices. Against this type of

association, I have revisited Foucault's concepts in order to trace pertinences and frictions with instituent praxis in its Guattarian expansion. This analysis has referred to a set of deliberately diverse discursive practices all of which might (at first glance) be described as aiming at parrhesia, in terms of both format and content of discourse, or rather, in ethico-aesthetic terms. A number of conclusive and new to the discussion observations can be drawn:

- The alteration of currency as a main principle of Cynicism could be strongly associated with instituent praxis. This is because this principle involves a twofold simultaneous alteration: the psychoanalytically connoted practice of accessing one's own currency as self-value through self-knowledge alongside changing the custom, breaking up the rules, habits, conventions and laws (the currency as *nomos*). Thus, the resonance of Cynicism and instituent praxis is revealed to extend beyond logos or discourse and into asignificatory realms.
- Aspects of discursive practices or project-institutions such as Former West and La Colonie demonstrate contemporary inversions and perversions of Cynicism. These are attributable to the conditions of discourse both in the art world and beyond. Despite the parrhesiastic aspiration evident in Former West's geopolitically loaded and informally co-produced knowledge-production rhetoric, the project showcases the inversion of Cynicism through newly accepted customary behaviours, norms and traditional schemas of conduct. These perpetuate exclusions, despite all intentions for inclusion, while, exposing attempts are rendered neutral, spectacular or perversely decontextualised, in a kind of twisted significational affirmation. Arguably, this process crucially involves heavily underexamined affective and pathic aspects in the contemporary context of such discourse. Aspiring-to-be-parrhesiastic discourse cannot alter the currency (beyond its discipline), partly due to the hyperinflated and spectacularised pathic elements invested in it. This is not ideology or affirmation in the Marcusian sense; it is desire adapted in the capitalist, personalised, non-heterogenetic sense. Similar to the marketisation of counterpublics, the

spectacularisation of currency-altering aspirations moves towards an intuited, perhaps unconscious, emancipation, only to the extent that capital allows. The precise psychoanalytic functions within these kinds of discursive conditions could be further researched.

- The example of La Colonie and its proclaimed anti-academicism or anti-intellectualism portray a related perversion of a possibly otherwise parrhesiastic rhetoric around decolonisation. The problem here is the illusion or fantasy of doing away altogether with (critical) discourse in favour of an alleged emancipatory alteration of the currency, purely through affective terms. Instituent praxis points to knowledge as irreducibly affective and a-significatory, acknowledging the impossibility of eradicating discourse or signification.
- The anti-academism evidenced in La Colonie could be seen as another distortion of Foucault's association of Cynicism with doctrinal thinness (aiming at *askesis*) and popular recruitment, against the 'easy' and 'lengthy' way of *logos*. This is because Foucault's association is aimed at a *pedagogical*, learning *askesis* rather than the illusory indulgence of the abolition of logos. Distortions persist in the broader discursive art world whereby the lengthy way of *logos* is not easy at all and hardly makes way for the practice (*askesis*) of those who might learn. This is arguably not unrelated to the aforementioned hyperinflated investment in the medium of discourse and the dominant signifiers therein.
- Ràdio Web MACBA could be seen as a discursive practice that aims at wide access, by avoiding exclusionary formats or targeted rhetoric. It thus alludes to the function of the panorama; the provision of access to the viewpoint of power, which in turn sees *en masse* and thus produces the public. However, in the post-internet, late capitalist condition, this function takes the form of an entirely customised and personalised mediation that only pretends to be panoramic. It provides individually consumed atomised glimpses into the multiple perspectives of power. Yet, power is also fragmented and diffused in algorithmic or other code and transgressions thereof.

The Foucauldian tradition of parrhesia and Cynicism seeks to use these concepts as fuel for contemporary dissensus without stripping them of historical and theoretical specificity. Foucault argued that parrhesia was a *polemic* form of truth-telling, distinct from apodictic, demonstrative or enigmatic forms. In this sense, Cynicism is reminiscent of Rancière's dissensus or litigiousness, which claims otherwise undeserved stakes in the *nemein* that founds the communal *nomos*. Rancière's caveat accentuates the possibility of a subject being excluded, wronged or unaccounted for, even after the liminal shift whereby the subject overthrows the distribution of the power to rule (*archein*) so that it is included. Similarly, despite nurturing the alteration of the currency, Cynicism seems to remain protective of the remit of a persistent dissensus against a leap into the creation or co-production of new significations as rules of law. But if, in an attempt to articulate the subject proper to politics, Rancière refers to the power to rule, or even the instituent-echoing *nemein* that *founds* the communal *nomos*, Foucault refers to a *currency* expanded throughout *bios* and *logos*, i.e. the remit of Cynicism. What could be implicit then in Foucault's protectiveness is a concern about the embodied and diffusive *topology* of power. Yet, not least through parrhesia and Cynicism, Foucault also theorised potential resistances in terms of the subject's relation to power. The Foucauldian concern around power could be seen as liminal to the project of instituent praxis, which should nonetheless be aimed at – not as a utopia but as the practice of the artificial real – if power is to be contained or even channeled towards such praxis. Without conceding the caveat of the parrhesiastic alteration of the currency, instituent praxis includes creation, as autopoiesis and heterogenesis – virtual ontologenetic corporeal and incorporeal universes. If Foucault's topology of power blurs the division between explicit forms of power and groundpower, then power should be assigned into a broader chartography: that of machinic, nonhuman, pre-personal subjectivity, asignificatory desire and the edifices of the artificial real, whereby instituent praxis could become the administrative, modelling clay of commonly produced (a)significatory quanta of justice.

Possible glitches in instituent praxis and artificiality

Mock-, alter-, para–institutions, such as the New World Summit, Idamm, Let's Get Together and Call Ourselves an Institute, as well as the university-projects that play with the form of the university and the Social Mining Union's mocking-but-earnest infrastructural/institutional critique could be seen as symptomatic of the broader condition of the artificial real. Some of them are more critical/mocking (Let's get Together, Idamm), while others could be seen as more earnest or propositional (the New World Summit, the Silent University, the Anti-university of London, the Copenhagen Free University, the Free/Slow University of Warsaw and the Social Mining Union). To some extent, they are *all* mocking, critical, earnest and propositional; even if they involve irony, they are mindful of not sacrificing an earnest proposal or concern. Importantly, however, the real in which they intervene is already permeated by facsimiles of institutional sobriety, administrative/legal infrastructure or absence thereof and a spectrum of shifting ethical and official legitimisation – all invested with affect. In this terrain, the practice of the aforementioned project-institutions consists in a micro-management of moulding, siphoning and encrypting proto-legible (a)significations and instances of shifting/emergent legitimisation. Such management can also be observed in the Consortium for Post-artistic Practices that seeks to advance a system of split individual authorship in order not to subscribe to or even perhaps deflate the name-related specular currency of art collectives, while still practising under the collective. It is in this terrain of the artificial real, whereby instituent praxis could unfold, as the production of a collective, machinic, pre-personal, autopoietic subjectivity that enunciates desire and code anew and generates multiple and virtual ontologies, beyond Oedipalised and personified signifiers and investments of desire adapted to capital.

The virtual spectres of the autonomous sphere of art operate as significational indexes allowing for the encryption of code enunciated by project-institutions. This code takes the form of propositional channeling of infrastructural or

institutional platforms or schemes. Such is the case, for instance, with the New World Summit, but also with the Institute for Radical Imagination and CAMP. This repurposing of art-spectral significations as encryption code can be different to socially-engaged art which operates in a terrain of absent social welfare. The encrypted repurposing operates in officially non-legitimate or semi-legitimate terrains, as, for instance, in the case of the New World Summit. Differences between socially-engaged art and an encrypted repurposing might also concern the parity of the participants' agency and authorial input. However, an examination of this proposition would be beyond the remit of this thesis and would require further research.

Ironic or earnest, critical or propositional, para/alter/mock-institutions perform a micromanagement of signification and legitimisation, whereby material and semiotic universes are multiply involved in either unsettling or meta-documenting the redundancies of dominant mental significations. Through Guattari, I have suggested that it is in this reconfigured scale and potential unsettling, that tactical practices can relapse into Oedipalised investments and far-right sentiments. This often goes hand in hand with a schematic take of parrhesia as espousing alternative or non-mainstream systems of knowledge, in an impulse to condemn perceived-as-imposed media and educational systems. This could be evidenced also in non-explicitly far-right cultic systems, such as Christian para-institutional renderings, as well as conspiracy theories like Flat Earth. This schematic tendency towards marginal knowledge-systems – which, as I have begun to suggest, differs substantially from Foucault's parrhesia – and potential overlaps with fascism could constitute another path for future research. My thesis only examines such relations in the last section of the final chapter through proposing the context of instituent praxis as a navigating tool for the functions of desire, subjectivity and signification in expressions of microfascism.

It takes a great deal of speculation to be able to discern the extent or the form of threat that the current forms of microfascism pose to the global and financialised late capitalist system; the far right's love and hate relationships to

the power of – media and other – big corporations are at least inconsistent. However, it is hardly news that there are major capitalist ventures profiting from and fueling far-right shifts – from profitable far-right leaning news and media outlets to financial speculation around outcomes of major political events. Molecularised microfascism can use network structures, such as the internet and its dark sides, as well as global financialised and speculative capital, in order to grow its common aspirations without compromising its locally irreducible forms.[2]

Earnest cultural interventions along the lines of so-called 'no-platforming' and battling anti-political correctness should refrain from ignoring the reality of desire, asignification and other realms of the psyche, or by postulating the compulsive consideration of an ethically (re)invented code (which is always partial), when at the same time desire is 'parked' at, entrusted with and adapted by capital. Such code-obsessive and often performative process can be just in itself but hardly produces any transformation, insofar as subjectivity-forming, non-identitarian desire is bracketed off. Moreover, the performance of an earnest abiding to an ethical code should not be seen as identical to anti-fascist intentions. The discursively violent anti-PC 4Chan-racist/sexist slur uttered by anonymous users (who otherwise might not see themselves as racist or sexist) could be accommodating saliently different operative forces to the massive re-surging waves of reactionary, nationalist, authoritarian and far-right political tendencies – throughout Europe – espousing vocally and practically or adjusting rhetorically what they see as very much earnest and code-abiding approaches, from The National Democratic Party of Germany (AfD) to the Greek neo-Nazi organisation and political party Golden Dawn.[3]

[2] Open Democracy has been following the 'dark money' that fueled far-right politics in Europe. See: Claire Provost, 'Revealed: Trump-Linked US Christian 'Fundamentalists' Pour Millions of 'Dark Money' into Europe, Boosting the Far Right,' *Open Democracy*, March 27, 2019, accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-trump-linked-us-christian-fundamentalists-pour-millions-of-dark-money-into-europe-boosting-the-far-right/?fbclid=IwAR3U9RUiNIxT1Z2uAcSWK-aaU2gjTA7c7a768BSESKC9bW0SkaaXyMJ7jKk.

[3] For European samples of such rhetoric, see: Angela Giuffrida, 'Europe's Far-Right Leaders Unite with a Vow to "Change History",' *The Guardian*, May 18, 2019, accessed May 21, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/18/europe-far-right-leaders-unite-milan-vow-to-change-history.

The interrelation between anti-PC language and fascist rhetoric and practice requires further research, in psychoanalytic and discursive terms.

The contribution of instituent praxis is to uphold autonomy in the sense of the production of subjectivity through the enunciation of a code and desire accordant with autopoiesis and heterogenesis, rather than fascist-Oedipal death instincts. In other words, according to ontogenetic universes, rather than pre-determined and fixed subject-to-object relations of desire, knowledge and power. If fascism claims autonomy as its right to design and perform its own code, its desire is a deadly Oedipalised one, reinvested in fixed and regressive ethico-aesthetic significations, beyond heterogenesis. If capitalism owns the code seemingly to the detriment of any alternative, it is because desire and asignifiction are being constantly abducted in their historically creative moments and adapted into the capitalist code. Instituent praxis glitches at those moments when desire does not simply push beyond one code or another but when it pushes towards the breakdown of all conscious or unconscious code that would take the form of a collective subjectivity, without aspiring to the artifice of other enunciative assemblages. These are probably moments of fundamentally pure or asocial violence, that would pose a limit to the potential of instituent praxis and would need to be further researched alongside psychoanalysis and, perhaps, in contradistinction to sociological accounts or cultural expressions of violence.

Instituent praxis today

David Harvey has argued that apart from the exploitation of labour in terms of surplus value, capital can also accumulate by 'thievery, robbery, usury, commercial cheating and scams of all sorts.'[4] In a 2019 interview, he lists some contemporary examples of such scams: '[b]ankruptcy moves by major corporations (e.g. airlines)' due to which employees lose their 'pension and heath care rights,' 'monopoly pricing in pharmaceuticals, in

[4] David Harvey, '"The Neoliberal Project is Alive But Has Lost Its Legitimacy": David Harvey,' interview by Jipson John and Jitheesh P.M., *The Wire*, February 9, 2019, accessed May 2, 2019, https://thewire.in/economy/david-harvey-marxist-scholar-neo-liberalism.

telecommunications, in health care insurance in the USA' and '[r]entier extractions based on accumulation by dispossession (e.g. acquiring land or mineral resources illegally or at cut rates).'[5] The latter extractions have increased as capital finds it increasingly difficult to 'precure productive uses for surplus capital.' In the same interview, Harvey asserts that even though the 'neo-liberal project is alive and well,' it has 'lost its *legitimacy'* and it 'no longer commands the *consent of the mass* of the population.' This is denoted by protests globally and the general economic climate which has clearly shifted from that of 'the 1980s and early 1990s': 'everyone now sees [that] neo-liberalism is about lining the pockets of the rich at the expense of the people.' However, this casualty of neo-liberal legitimacy is also reflected in neoliberalism's necessary 'alliance[s] with state authoritarianism' – already observable since the 2000s, and more recently with 'neo-fascism.' At any rate, the possibilities that this historical curb of legitimacy might open up should be carefully examined, given that, arguably, the post-1989 no-alternative narrative that has been embraced by the Left assumes the inextricability between the neoliberal logic and its canonical, lawful and legitimate character. By extension, it often assumes either a communist utopian end point whereby – and not before – desire would be realised as a legitimate outcome; or the potential of imminent moments of spontaneous, revolutionary desire to eventually attain the common, presupposing again a hinge on means of illegality. The agonistic approach, which would not discard the battle for legitimacy on behalf of counter-hegemonic struggles, recognises the vitality of this conundrum. However, it falls short of an articulation of subjectivity (beyond the people, translated as the non-elite) that embraces desire and artificiality as ontologically creative (or heterogenetic) and psychoanalytically pertinent. Seductive in its practical mandate for anti-elitism, agonism is not safeguarded by a clear methodology under which the counter-hegemonic struggle would not end up embracing or platforming populist authoritarianism or (economic) nationalism, masked as anti-elitism.

[5] Harvey, '"The Neoliberal Project".'

Instituent praxis suggests that the process of founding a communal nomos is key to the whole trajectory of politics. Such praxis permits the hypothesis that a legitimacy crisis of the neo-liberal project could be channeled towards the institution of a much-needed, newly and *commonly legitimised* reality, instead of the neo-liberal project's spasmodic alliances with state authoritarianism and neo-fascism, which seem to easily accommodate the desire of the masses – in and through micro-instances. Such reality could amount to the institution of the common, insofar as this is what would be *desired* and produced as a communal nomos through instituent praxis. The indicative European practices I have discussed in this thesis have pointed to a transversal, extendable framework: instituent praxis should not be reduced to selected instituent practices, even though praxis or practice cannot be absent from the instituent project.

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